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**FREDERICK THE GREAT**

**THE MEMOIRS OF HIS READER**

**HENRI DE CATT**

**(1758-1760)**







*Frederick the Great*  
*From an engraving of a portrait by E. F. Cunningham*

# FREDERICK THE GREAT

THE MEMOIRS OF HIS READER

HENRI DE CATT

(1758-1760)

TRANSLATED BY F. S. FLINT

With an Introduction by

LORD ROSEBERY

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THIS translation has been made from the French text published from the manuscript in the Prussian State Archives under the title *Unterhaltungen mit Friedrich dem Grossen. Memoiren und Tagebücher von Heinrich de Catt, herausgegeben von Reinhold Koser*, Leipzig, 1884. Only the *Memoiren* and a few supplementary pages are given here. The *Tagebücher* cover the same ground, but in a briefer fashion, in the form of diary notes; these notes often supplement and even correct the fuller version of the Memoirs; but their inclusion would have made bulkier an already bulky work, without any great corresponding advantage. The Memoirs are evidently unfinished; even what has been written does not seem to have been read with any great care by the author; solecisms and faults of style abound; and also the German editor was not, apparently, always sure of his French or of the correct reading of the manuscript. Some obvious errors have been put right in this translation, but it must be remembered that this is an English translation of the French conversation of a Prussian king, reported by a Swiss, and edited by a German.

The translations of the numerous quotations from the French poets are given, not as literary, but as literal versions for those who need them. The notes in square brackets are partly from the notes of the German editor, partly supplied by the translator. All other footnotes are Catt's.

F. S. F.





## INTRODUCTION

CATT's book on his relations with King Frederick II. is a book of human interest. It has, too, the unexpected advantage of being written in French, for Catt was a French-speaking Swiss, and Frederick disdained to speak German. Indeed, on Thié-bault's expressing a wish to learn that language, the King forbade him almost with violence, and made him give his word of honour not to acquire it, as he was fortunate in being ignorant of such a tongue.

Catt's narrative is one of the most faithful portraits of that monarch that we possess. It covers indeed only two years of the long period during which Catt served him, but they are tremendous years of trial and stress, and there could not be a better test period. Zorndorf, Hochkirch, and Kunersdorf are all comprised; doubtful and bloody victory, crushing defeat, annihilation or little less, and we can see how Frederick comported himself under all. Prussian critics with all the elaborate minuteness of German editorship have picked holes in Catt, which are not serious. They think, for example, that Catt wrote or rewrote

much of his memoirs at a later date than the professed one. That is highly probable; of few memoirs can it not be said. Memory amplifies the rude notes of the time, and imagination perhaps is kindled. We certainly would not wish to swear to every word of Catt's record. Nevertheless we believe it to be a generally veracious account of Frederick as seen through the medium of highly coloured glasses.

Catt was a Swiss student at the University of Utrecht. He was, we are told, well acquainted with French literature, and had besides the manners and usages of good society, having frequented the best houses in Holland. Moreover, he possessed a still more precious treasure in a disposition the cheerfulness of which must have been invaluable to him in his official life. An element less congenial to his master was a strict adherence to the doctrines of Calvin. Still, so pleasing was he to Frederick, that the King bestowed on him the customary compliment of an epistle in verse, and the affectionate nickname of Gresset, after the graceful French poet. Moreover, not satisfied with an epistle to Catt he also composed love poems for Catt addressed to his betrothed: so close were their relations for a long period of years.

The meeting of Catt and Frederick was almost a romance. It was on a canal boat in Holland.

Catt, a Swiss teacher twenty-seven years old, out on a holiday, sees a gentleman in a black wig and cinnamon-coloured coat who describes himself as first musician to the King of Poland, and who, after staring at him some time, asks him abruptly who he is. Catt, nettled at his summary manners, refuses to reply. But presently the musician becomes more polite, and draws Catt into amiable converse. They discuss government, religion, literature, and such high topics. Finally Frederick, for he is the strange gentleman, parts with the young man as from a friend, and soon sends for him, keeps him for some score of years under the title of 'reader,' which should rather be 'listener,' and which veils the duties of a Literary Crony, Catt's real employment. To listen reverentially to Frederick declaiming tragedies, or funeral orations, or any pieces that he happens to know by heart, or, worst of all, his own intolerable verses, to profess enjoyment of these recitations, and to place adroitly sympathy or compliment, these are Catt's functions. Great men, and even men not great, often have need of such retainers. Johnson had Boswell, Goethe had Eckermann, Byron had Moore, Southey had Grosvenor Bedford, and so forth. It is something to possess a blind and devoted admirer in whose presence one can, so to speak, unbutton oneself and discourse about

one's emotions, recite one's works, and explain their subtle meaning or sublime intention; a friendly conduit of egotism.

Catt joined Frederick at Breslau in March 1758, and boasts of having retained his entire confidence for twenty-four years, a unique boast if true; till their relations chilled in the last five years of the King's life.

As to this breach there is an allegation, true or false, which would serve to explain it. A gentleman, it is said, wished to obtain a Prussian order and gave Catt a hundred louis-d'or to procure it for him. Catt failed, but bought the insignia of the 'Order of Generosity,' which he sent to his friend, who wore it with pride. We are not surprised to learn that the 'Order of Generosity' had come to an end at the accession of Frederick, at least as regards his own subjects; so the reappearance of the order brought about an inquiry damaging to Catt. Then there was a suspicion that Catt was in the pay of the French Government, and also that he had levied a share of the profits on the books supplied to the King's library. Truly or falsely, Frederick suspected or discovered some such circumstance and rid himself of Catt. It may only have been a pretext. 'You may serve the King faithfully and always,' said the hapless Colonel Balbi, when writhing under Frederick's



'infernal' sarcasms, 'but if you fail once all the rest goes for nothing.' And Marwitz, one of the King's aides-de-camp, confirmed this. 'For the least thing and even for nothing he will send you about your business after thirty years' service.' Bielfeld too, just before he bids a final farewell to Berlin, makes a not less significant remark. 'A small fault is sufficient to obliterate the memory of twenty years' faithful service.'

Catt was of course a devoted admirer, but his incense was not of that gross kind, burned by others, which obscures the idol and defiles the worshipper. He was indeed a Court official, librarian or secretary, and might by the ill-natured be considered a sycophant. That he was not. He was an innocent young student, overawed and enchanted by contact with a great monarch, but capable of speaking out frankly and even boldly. At an early period of their intercourse he gave Frederick clearly to understand that he would not submit to the brutal practical jokes in which that monarch indulged. And his candour was constantly tested, for Frederick was perpetually asking what was said about him. Catt was moreover used as a channel to convey to the King the criticisms and alarms of the camp. These Frederick would dismiss, intent on reading aloud his newest stanzas, which the most loyal of secretaries cannot

follow with relish, when full of the dismal forebodings of the army. On one occasion these were amply realised, while Frederick occupied himself with a parody on Ecclesiastes.

It is clear of course that Frederick knew and intended that Catt should keep a journal. At such close quarters Catt could not have kept such a record without the knowledge and therefore connivance of the King, who indeed bids him write. It is obvious, too, that when Frederick discoursed about his plans and battles to the young man, it was with the intention that they should be recorded, otherwise it would not have been worth his while. This, however, by no means lessens the value of the journal. It is well to know what Frederick said and wished to be thought. Moreover, in certain supreme junctures the poignancy of his position deprived him of his mask, and he displayed the natural man, so far as there was a natural man to display.

This last phrase is not intended by way of disparagement. A great general inured to tremendous hazards and vicissitudes has to curb and disguise his emotions until he almost loses the sensations of nature. He has to appear calm when uneasy, imperturbable in the face of calamity, confident when least confident, so as to inspire his officers and his troops; he is, in fine, ground by

fortune into temper harder than steel. Little or nothing of nature survives or is possible. And this is pre-eminently true of Frederick.

If tears be a test, however, this is subject to modification; though tears vary in kind. But whatever their quality the quantity of Frederick's tears is undeniable. Catt reveals him as the most lachrymose of monarchs. He bursts into tears when reading Racine's *Britannicus* aloud, and is unable to continue. He weeps, and no wonder, on hearing that the brother whose heart he had broken was dead. He weeps, and no wonder, when he hears of the illness and death of his sister the Margravine of Baireuth. She was his favourite in early years, but the Margravine's account of their latest relations hardly makes one expect any violent explosion of sorrow. However, any allusion unlocks new fountains. When he returns from Kunersdorf, tears. When he hears that the disaster of Maxen has only enhanced the zeal of his troops, tears. Catt indeed represents him as constantly weeping. There is nothing discreditable in these emotions, but they comport little with the conception of the grim sardonic sovereign; they remind one rather of the 'iron tears down Pluto's cheek.'

It is of course true that we have frequent records of Frederick's lachrymatory powers. But these

tears were public and theatrical tears, tears of ceremony, tears of etiquette. The flow recorded by Catt on various occasions were for Catt alone and are perhaps less open to suspicion.

This aspect of Frederick is alien to Englishmen. But it should be remembered that the habits of continental nations are more emotional than our own. Men here do not embrace each other, and they weep with difficulty. On the mainland it is different, and we must make this allowance when we record the constant sobs of this redoubtable warrior.

But the King has a stranger and even more copious relief than tears. Each calamity has a welcome aspect for him in that it provides an occasion for verse. When he hears of the critical condition of his sister he announces the news to Catt, and also the fact that he has already drafted an epistle on the melancholy topic, and at once reads it aloud to Catt till interrupted by his emotion. ‘Vous me voyez tout triste, mon ami, et dans de grandes angoisses sur l’état de ma sœur, *je m’occupe d’elle dans cet instant, j’ai fait un croquis d’une épître pour elle*, je veux la travailler avec soin pendant le temps de notre séjour dans ce quartier-ci.’ Presently he is anxious to read this sketch, but is again silenced by tears. He read it aloud constantly next day, and again the day afterwards.



The third day he again read it to Catt, who remained with him two hours. He was engrossed with it. It was the eve of Hochkirch. Next day he seemed to be ruined.

The evening of the defeat he summoned Catt, and declaimed a passage from Racine's *Mithridate*. When Catt mentions the anxiety of the soldiers for the preservation of his life, the ready tears stream down his cheeks. Catt is dismissed and recalled. The King has heard of the death of Marshal Keith. He laments his loss in a sentence, then asks what the Earl Marischal will feel under such a bereavement. A method of consolation at once occurs to him: 'Je célébrerai en vers notre perte commune.'

Here there is a tragic interlude. He laments his fate and the odious trade to which the chance of his birth has condemned him. A strange self-deception. But he adds that he has that about him which will end the drama when it becomes insupportable: and he produces from below his shirt a little oval gold box containing eighteen opium pills. 'There are enough here,' he says, 'to take one to those gloomy shores whence there is no return.'

His other and less drastic consolation is Lucretius. 'That is my breviary.'

His compositions, however, are by no means con-

fined to the elegiac epistles we have mentioned. Once, for example, we catch a glimpse of a 'Plan of Education' for those destined to the ecclesiastical profession. To this too the hapless Catt has to listen, and he alone seems to have been cognisant of it, as it was burned; unfortunately, as every school of theology would welcome such a treatise from such a hand.

What are we to make of this portrait, of this strange figure thus represented?

We must acknowledge at once that we are not in a position at this time to be confident of the impartiality of our judgment. Waves of blood are washing over the world at this moment, and the source of much of this is Frederick. For his policy of rapacity without scruple and without conscience has inspired or tainted Prussian policy ever since. The House of Brandenburg has, it is true, both before and after him, pursued its elevation with a single mind and energy, without any tenderness as to the means. Even Frederick William II. could distract his mind from his mistresses sufficiently first to guarantee and then plunder Poland. Even the conscientious and molluscous Frederick William III. filched Hanover from his ally when he got the chance, and attempted to swallow Saxony, though with only partial success. Sometimes by money-lending, sometimes by pawn-

broking, sometimes by grabbing, the burgraves of Nuremberg pursued their undeviating purpose. But Frederick as their greatest sovereign condensed this practice into avowed and definite policy. It had been a tradition, it was now an heirloom from a national hero, as sacred as such an unsanctified heirloom could be. Frederick stamped himself ineffaceably on Prussia.

The greatest success of the family was perhaps the appropriation of East Prussia, the territory of the Teutonic Knights, of which one of their princes was the Grand Master and Trustee for life. This Hohenzollern, by deftly converting his life interest in trust property into a freehold for himself, secured this great province for his future realm. Acquisition by any means was the object of the successive Hohenzollerns, until at last they fashioned a long lean kingdom which was said from its shape and aggressiveness to be all sting. Then there came the King of preparation, Frederick William I., a half-crazy boor with a shrewd zest for accumulation of money and men, giants if possible, which he had the wit not to attempt to use but to prepare for the son whom he had wished to kill. Then came the man who was to use them for the further aggrandisement of his house. Frederick lost no time. His father had been one of the guarantors of the Austrian dominions, and

almost at the moment of his own accession the guarantee came into force when there succeeded to the Austrian throne a young woman whose interests that guarantee was framed to protect and whose father was thought to have saved his life. That solemn bond and that claim of gratitude did not cause Frederick a moment's hesitation. While exchanging cordial assurances with the young Queen he poured a great army into her territories and seized Silesia. Not otherwise did his Prussians in the twentieth century deal with guaranteed Belgium.

To his plunder or acquisition, call it what you will, Frederick clung with superb and indomitable tenacity. That is the one sublime strain in his character. And he rounds off his reign by partitioning Poland. In this nefarious scheme, of which he was the prime instigator, he was also the greatest gainer, for he obtained West Prussia, which linked the two portions of his kingdom together and entitled him to declare himself King *of* instead of *in* Prussia. Again in the affair of the Bavarian succession, when he took up arms, he declared, for the purest and highest motives in the interests of Germany alone, it transpired at the peace that the reversion of Anspach and Baireuth had, as it were by accident, accrued to him as the reward of his altruism.



Rich slices of Austria and Poland, these satisfy the Hohenzollern for the time. But the reign of Frederick means much more than these provinces. For, as has already been set forth, he stamped and moulded Prussian policy into the shape which it wears this day. Get what you can when occasion offers, reputably if possible, if not, unscrupulously, keep up huge armaments as a menace to the world and a means of taking advantage of opportunity; this, stated crudely, is the policy that Frederick bequeathed to his country. Prussia has been ever since like a pike in a pond, armed with sharp teeth and endless voracity, poised for a dart when the proper prey shall appear. But this policy, brutal as it is, requires genius, and Prussia has not been richly endowed in that way. There was one such, but he was discarded, and Phaeton mounted the chariot of the sun in his stead, with the results that we know.

This is a digression only intended to show that Frederick, and so Catt's book, is well worthy of study at this time. Let us then renew our examination of the portrait presented by our faithful Swiss. We have seen Frederick's tears and his verses. His only other pleasure, except those of the table, was the flute, in which he was no mean proficient. The flute was to Frederick what smoking is to the men of to-day. It filled up gaps in his time, soothed

him, assisted meditation and digestion. Tears, verses, flute, there is something in this Melibœan aspect of a great Captain fighting for desperate life in a welter of war which is not without its fascination.

Is all this natural? Were these tears, shed in conjunction with the composition of unreadable odes, a theatrical posture intended to impress Catt or the irrepressible ebullitions of a stern and repressed nature? It is hard to say, for human nature has strange labyrinths, but it is scarcely possible to think that they were not the result of dramatic art. They seem to us the necessary screen of the passionate emotions of ill-fortune and disaster. So considerable is the imposture indeed, that did one only know Frederick through Catt one might regard him as a man mainly of literary tastes. But it was his duty to wear a mask.

Both as a general and as a sovereign he was bound to dissimulate; in both it is often not a vice but a virtue. Moreover, we must remember that the King was well aware that his officers cross-questioned Catt as a sort of royal confidant with regard to the King's demeanour and intentions, while Frederick would constantly ask Catt as to what was being said in the camp. On the whole, we may say that Frederick knew his business, that he regarded Catt as a channel, but that frequently he forgot

that character and enjoyed a debauch of odes and recitations without any afterthought.

But the young scribe gives at least some lamentations of Frederick which indicate, if not an attempt to deceive others, at least an effort to deceive himself. One of the reasons, he says, which must make him always regret the death of his beloved brother was that it put an end to a favourite plan of his own; which was to hand over the government to this prince and retire to a chosen society of enlightened friends with whom to pass the rest of his existence. Whether Frederick ever seriously entertained such an idea seems much more than doubtful when we remember that he devoted the peaceful remainder of his life to the work of administration, a toil in which he delighted and which he carried on till the very moment of death. If he did, no man ever deceived himself so completely. If he did not, Catt would seem to have recorded either a passing mood or an attempt to impose on his hearer. More than once did he expatiate to the secretary on his passion for a quiet life, had not the gods disposed of him otherwise, and dilate on the repose which he loved above all things, except it may be presumed in the autumn of 1740. But he did not impose on our innocent Swiss, for at last Catt blurted out, 'It is an admirable plan, Sire, but it will never be

realised.' And when Frederick asks 'Why not?' Catt points out that when the King has concluded an advantageous peace he will not be willing to descend from a throne which will have been assured by so many sacrifices. And the clear-sighted secretary does not hesitate to indicate an opinion, though not to Frederick, that the whole is a little comedy. In which we are disposed to agree with him.

We must remember, and this is a vital consideration, that Frederick had passed a terrible youth under the tutelage of a mad, intemperate father, who had caned and degraded him, and taunted him with his degradation. By the same paternal monarch he had been imprisoned and condemned to death and rescued with difficulty from execution. He had had, moreover, the supreme horror of witnessing the execution of a friend who died for being his confidant. His experience had been that of those wooden effigies of their heroes which the Prussians of to-day delight to honour by driving nails into them; but in his case the nails had been driven into his living body by his own father. When love might have afforded a consolation he was driven into a marriage which he ostentatiously abhorred. Hence when he came to the throne he came with a shrivelled heart and a sardonic scorn for all mankind, its morals, its conventions,



its cant; there was little human left. That, it seems to us, is the secret of Frederick's character. It is revealed in his wish to be buried with his dogs. Friends he had none, with the possible exception of the Earl Marischal, who had almost made him believe in virtue. The dual nature of his famous intimacy with Voltaire is notable as throwing light on Frederick's character. It was proclaimed to the world as a sublime friendship, but it was strongly modified by shrewd and cynical penetration. Frederick never ceases talking with Catt about the great Frenchman. An idolater of Voltaire's vast and active intellect, he never flags in his admiration, submits his compositions to him as to a schoolmaster with diffidence and apprehension, but never fails to speak of his character as the vilest and most contemptible that can be conceived. He regards him, in fact, with the rigid discrimination which makes a Russian official ask a pope's blessing as a priest after having been compelled to flog him as a man. He was always ready to adore Voltaire as a poet and repudiate him as a friend. So definite a distinction was a hindrance to genuine affection. Another symptom of his cynicism was that though there were some in his circle like the Earl Marischal who would not tolerate liberties, he had enough of his father in him to delight in coarse practical jokes,

and even more in cruel sarcasms on those who were his boon companions at Sans-Souci. One of these practical jokes he narrated with glee to Catt. Pollnitz and d'Argens could have reported many others. Men in private life who are guilty of such outrages soon find themselves alone, or alone with dishonest sycophants; and kings against whom no reprisals are possible are apt to discover that though they may still be surrounded by an abject and mercenary court, they have forfeited all possibility of friendship. It is not too much to say that Frederick died as friendless as his father, though with his spaniels pigging around him, and that his isolation was the deliberate and not unwelcome result of his scorn and distrust of mankind.

Indeed, in spite of the tears and epistles we see no proof of real sensibility recorded by Catt, with the exception of his apparent emotion on hearing of the anxiety of his soldiers for his safety. His sorrow for his brother and sister and Marshal Keith falls in the category of his tears and epistles and need not be analysed here. We are not offering blame. We have already explained that in our judgment great generals must be composed of beaten steel. When to that composition is added the hardness produced by Frederick's training in childhood and youth, enough has been said. One cannot make puddings out of a grindstone.

Again, his cynicism reveals itself in his method of recruiting his forces from deserters, prisoners, and crimped men. On one occasion the whole Saxon army, some fifteen thousand men, after surrendering to him, was incorporated without its officers in his own, though they never ceased to show their abhorrence of his service and deserted in numbers at every opportunity. 'They make as good cannon fodder as any others; what does it matter to these wretches on which side they fight.' So, we can fancy, the King reasoned.

Was, too, his vaunted tolerance more than the expression of a cynical contempt for all creeds? A 'conscientious objector' who crossed him would, we apprehend, have speedily found the limit of Frederick's toleration.

Frederick, then, if entitled at all to the epithet of Great, by which it is indeed convenient to distinguish him from the crowd of Fredericks, deserves it only as a general, an administrator, and as a man of heroic persistency. Apart from these it would be a daring advocate who would claim anything in his character that entitled him to such a title. It is one which requires the assent of mankind; it cannot be conferred, as such epithets were wont to be by the Roman Senate in its degradation. The present German Emperor, William II., has constantly endeavoured to affix it to his grand-

father, the Emperor William I. But the label will not stick, it falls off as often as it is placed, and history will not recognise it.

As to his generalship, only experts can decide, and they, it would seem, have pronounced a high and final judgment in his favour. When Napoleon has pronounced at least one of his battles to be a masterpiece, there is nothing more to be said. But it may be alleged, though we are not competent to decide the question, that Frederick does not seem to have been a born general like his eulogist, but to have learned his business on the battlefield, not without painful and sometimes disastrous experience. Even our author, a humble but candid idolater, did not shrink from criticism. Before the disaster of Hochkirch, he tells Frederick that his officers said that his camp was commanded by the enemy and was exposed to imminent danger. But as Marshal Keith had told the King the same with emphasis and vigour, it was not likely that Catt would be successful. 'If the Austrian generals let us stay quiet in this position,' the Field Marshal had remarked, 'they deserve to be hanged.' After Kunersdorf, Catt tells the King that many people think he was too eager to engage in that battle, and that if he had been satisfied with the great advantages he gained at first, the enemy would have retreated, but that in



pushing things too far he had given Loudon the opportunity to fall on him with fresh cavalry. Frederick thanks him for his frankness and answers the criticism at length.

A few months later Catt tells his master that he has observed that when Frederick was too confident he was usually unsuccessful, and successful when he was despondent; hinting at rashness and lack of foresight. The King challenges instances. 'Olmütz,' cites Catt. 'Vero,' is the reply. 'Then Zorndorf, where you expected to smash the Russians without much loss. Then at Hochkirch you said you would drive the Austrians into Bohemia.' If this conversation be not an afterthought of Catt's, it required no slight courage in him to remind an irascible monarch, smarting under disaster, of former faults.

But we have not the competence or the courage, as we have said, to follow Catt's example and criticise in the slightest degree the generalship of this great soldier. Still, thus much must at least be admitted, that it was the death of the Empress Elizabeth that saved Frederick from ruin, rather than his own splendid achievements.<sup>1</sup> When the

<sup>1</sup> Catt and Frederick had a bet on this event which Catt won. But he cannot conceal his disappointment. The wager was to be a 'discretion.' 'I shall make you a present if I lose, and you what you please if I win,' said the King. The supreme news arrives, and Frederick with low bows hands poor Catt an epitaph on the Empress; priceless, no doubt, in its way, but still something less than the young Swiss had expected.

odds against which he fought are considered, this is not remarkable, but it shows how precarious was the triumph on which his fame rests.

We must, however, under present circumstances call attention to his views of 'frightfulness' as now practised by his countrymen. 'Le premier qui pillera ou détruira une maison doit être pendu sur l'heure,' he said, speaking of his own soldiers. Speaking of the enemy and of the havoc they had wrought in the house where he lodged, and of a dead woman in the garden, he asks, 'Tout cela ne fait-il pas dresser les cheveux de la tête, est-ce là faire la guerre? *Les princes qui se servent de telles troupes, ne devraient-ils pas rougir de honte? Ils sont coupables et responsables devant Dieu de toutes les horreurs qu'elles commettent.*' And again, 'Les nouvelles que je reçois de ces cosaques barbares font dresser les cheveux à la tête, ils mettent tout à feu et à sang dans mon pauvre pays, leur marche est sans cesse ensanglantée par toutes les horreurs imaginables; *j'espère que la justice divine me vengera un jour ou l'autre de ces chefs qui ordonnent ou qui permettent de pareilles abominations.*' Admirable and memorable as are these sentiments, it is strange to hear this professed infidel appealing to the Almighty for redress.

And again, speaking of atrocities alleged to have been committed by the troops of Loudon: 'Je

vous l'ai dit, mon cher, la guerre qui ne se fait qu'en barbare perd toutes les mœurs et fait de l'homme un être sauvage, elle les rend brutaux, féroces et barbares; je ne saurais vous dire, mon cher, jusqu'où va mon indignation et ma colère.'

It would have been well, we think, if the Prussians of to-day had assimilated this part of the heritage they received from Frederick as devoutly as they have adopted his other methods.

We pass from his generalship to his civil administration. Here there is something to admire and much to criticise. His devotion to his duty is beyond praise. He fagged like a clerk under the eye of a stern master, and his master was duty. In summer he generally rose at three, in winter an hour later, and worked at his correspondence till eight. Then till ten he received his Cabinet secretaries, unhappy slaves condemned to unremitting toil, then till noon he gave audiences, rode or walked or reviewed. At noon he dined, and digestion was facilitated by the flute. Then came the secretaries with his letters. After this task he might walk. But the hours four to six he rigidly and unfortunately reserved for literary composition. Later he supped or received his intimate associates, and at nine went to bed.

This was his day at Potsdam. But this represents but a small part of the labours of this

indefatigable man. He was always pervading his kingdom, reviewing, inspecting, planning or surveying improvements. Nothing was above or below his notice. His finger, to use an expressive vulgarism, was in every pie. He scrutinised every penny that was spent. In his own household he knew the proper price of every dish, the place of every bottle of wine. And the same system was applied everywhere. Uneasy were the heads of those who had to render to him an account of their stewardship.

Frederick, like his father, administered the whole kingdom as a vigilant and frugal proprietor manages his estate. The father would hang a man whose accounts showed a defalcation, and he no doubt got his pennyworth. But Frederick, with far greater application and immeasurably more ability, proceeded on the same principles.

Now a virtuous and able despotism, when it can be secured, is held by many to be the best form of government. But a meddling and minute despotism, however beneficently it may sometimes operate, whether exercised by a man or a community, is, we take it, one of the most intolerable; and Frederick's can hardly be characterised otherwise. He cut, no doubt, some Gordian knots in a way which provokes our envy. No lawsuit, for example, was to last more than a year. But



even this summary jurisdiction did not always secure justice. Still worse was it when Frederick personally intervened. The case of the miller Arnold is memorable, in which he arbitrarily punished the innocent and rewarded the guilty. Nor when convinced of his error would he atone for it; that was left for the tardy equity of his successor's reign. A mistaken sense of royal dignity, we are told, prevented Frederick from revoking his decision. But the maintenance of the royal dignity does not solace defrauded parties or imprisoned judges, nor does it reassure a nation as to the administration of justice. A county court judge would have been a greater blessing to Prussian justice than Frederick's meddlesome interference.

One reads of the hundreds of schools and villages built by the King, of the advances in money and kind made to communities and individuals, of the areas of waste land reclaimed. For all this part of his administration we cannot award praise too high, more especially when we consider the exiguity of his means. Here also he no doubt made mistakes, as who would not who insisted on so minute a supervision as he exercised. But it cannot be doubted that in his agricultural and colonising policy he must have done much good.

In another direction, however, what he did was

extremely injurious and derogatory to his subjects. On the advice of Helvetius he inaugurated a new system of customs and excise, with a multitude of Frenchmen to work it. Why he should have insisted on importing a financial executive from a country whose finances, to say the least, were in a most questionable condition, does not appear. Prussians might well resent the tutelage of the French, but they resented more than the reproach to their honesty and capacity the intolerable vexations which they experienced at the hand of these foreigners. The increase in the revenue was small, but as Sir Andrew Mitchell remarked, 'The French were beaten once in the field of Rossbach by the Prussians, but they are every day taking their revenge in the towns.' It cannot be doubted that this strange attempt at drastic but alien reform profoundly affected the popularity of the monarch. But it was eminently characteristic of Frederick, for it displayed his cynical indifference to the resentment and the proper pride of his people. To be tickled by a plausible project and to introduce it at once without for a moment balancing the effect on the feelings of his subjects, was part of his universal scorn. These poor taxpayers were pawns, to be moved at will. It is in this way that great legislators meet with great catastrophes.

Indeed, one feels inclined to ask what were the feelings of Frederick's own Prussians under the oppression of his blessings. In every one of these there was the fatal taint of despotism; paternal if you like, benevolent if you will, but interfering and oppressive. Free initiative was guided, controlled or suppressed. Everything proceeded from the King. The same despotism which enabled Frederick to drench Europe with blood without a word of consent or authority from a single subject, enabled him to hedge and ditch and drain. To people in other countries these gifts of Frederick would have been unwelcome under such conditions. It does not seem to have been so in Prussia. The severe discipline of the army pervaded the nation.

In one curious instance there were signs of recalcitrancy. Frederick, following his father's example, abolished villeinage and serfdom in his dominions. But it was proved to the King this emancipation, so far from being welcome, would cause every able-bodied man to leave the country. Another local experiment of the kind actually caused the peasants to sell their stocks and emigrate, hiring themselves out as labourers elsewhere. They were afraid, it would seem, to cultivate for themselves without the customary assistance of their lords. Frederick appears to have learned this lesson so thoroughly that he afterwards decreed

that all disbanded soldiers should return as serfs to their former lords, and that their wives, widows, and children, though born free, should be bound in the same way. And with the same pen he was writing declamatory letters in a tone of exalted philosophy.

This is all part of the man. He was the last person in the world to deceive himself or be deceived by phrases. No doubt, on the other hand, he thought that he could so deceive other men. That Voltaire and he when interchanging compliments were never each other's dupe is, we think, certain. But Voltaire was a genius from whom Frederick could not bear to be altogether separated, while Frederick was a king whose assiduities flattered Voltaire. This is, however, an exceptional case, for they were exceptional men. But Frederick's phrases were, we think, the outcome of his general contempt for mankind. The phrases might be accepted at their face value, or they might not, what did it matter? They had a good appearance and might succeed. If they did not succeed, nothing was lost but a little paper and ink. In this system of florid but transparent professions he had only one rival, his great contemporary, Catherine II.

But, to return to his domestic administration, it may be said, except on the intellectual side, the



encouragement of universities, academies, and the arts, to have been an intelligent development of his father's, tainted perhaps with an even greater predominance of paternal interference and oppression. Of its kind there was nothing better to be seen. But his system, like that of Napoleon, had one mortal defect, it was personal and suited only to his own powers. It was a fatal inheritance, for the qualities necessary to its efficient working could not be bequeathed with it. Fredericks and Napoleons are exceptional products. The ordinary man cannot wield the weapon of the giant; Excalibur passed with Arthur. Frederick was succeeded by a voluptuous mystic who could only emulate his uncle in perfidy. The Napoleonic Empire must have crumbled on the accession of the King of Rome. Neither Frederick nor Napoleon could have imagined that his administration could be successfully continued by any beings much inferior to himself.

There is perhaps this difference in the case of Frederick. He could not follow the advice of Dr. Pangloss, as he had no garden to cultivate; he had to plough sands. And he may well have felt that his first duty was to make the very best of his barren estate and bequeath it, fertilised as much as possible and developed, to his successor, who must do the best he could to administer it by any avail-



able means. But it would have been more reasonable, one would think, to have framed a less centralised system which would not depend for success on the single supervision of one exceptional man.

What, in fine, did Frederick bequeath to Prussia? Well, he bequeathed his name and fame as a great conqueror. He became in a secular sense the Patron Saint of Germany. To him they looked up, to him they could always appeal when they contemplated some peculiarly flagrant act. His immediate successor, warmed by his example, pocketed British subsidies without an effort to perform the service for which they were bestowed, and employed them in the dismemberment of Poland which he had just sworn to guarantee. In truth, except under the tepid personalities of Frederick William the Third and Fourth, we find Frederick in all Prussian history. Why not? He had succeeded to scattered territories and left a compact homogeneous Prussian kingdom, doubling its population, nearly doubling its territory, and trebling its revenue. And how had he done this? By seizing the guaranteed province of Silesia, and the convenient provinces of Poland. That, it was felt henceforth, was obviously the proper policy; take what you can and how you can without regard to the means. He bequeathed

territory, power, and comparative prosperity, but he also bequeathed the terrible heritage of systematic perfidy. He bequeathed too, what is not so easily transmissible, an heroic and indomitable tenacity. With a heterogeneous army of Prussians, deserters and prisoners of war, he bade defiance to Europe. Whatever storms might rage around him, although every great military power was arrayed against him, himself often racked with disabling illness, he survived, with poison next his heart, composing and reciting to Catt with death and destruction on either side. How splendid a figure had his cause been just.

He also bequeathed, it is fair to say, abhorrence by anticipation of the nameless deeds of infamy which the Prussians of our day have perpetrated, though his own hands were by no means clean in this respect!

Finally, he bequeathed the doctrine that all was right for Prussia, which had a code of public morality which did not apply elsewhere. The end, the aggrandisement of Prussia, justified any means. But no such extenuation was valid for any other country. Prussia, to apply a common proverb, might steal a horse when another Power might not look over a hedge. When Joseph II. attempted to annex Bavaria, not by spoliation but by agreement with the Elector, the stern Prussian moralist was up

in arms at once to prevent so obvious an iniquity. And now when we hear Prussia which starved Paris denouncing to God and man a blockade which affects her supply of food, we plainly discern once more the voice and heritage of Frederick.

Again, all through the Seven Years' War we hear the King complaining of the wanton malice of his enemies who will not leave him alone, the wail of oppressed innocence, with Silesia in the background. So now we hear his kingdom, after preparing for a generation a vast conspiracy against the freedom of mankind, protesting against the iniquitous attack of her neighbours, the wolf attempting to bleat. This too is part of the heritage of Frederick.

Again, when Bute withdrew the British subsidy, the pure indignation of Frederick, who shifted his alliances as he shifted his shirt, was little less than sublime.

Systematic perfidy, rapacity and hypocrisy, these would seem to be the sinister inheritance that Frederick bequeathed to his people. If in the Elysian fields he should meet with one who charged him with this, he would, we think, shrug his shoulders and admit it, for denial would no longer be useful.

The contemplation of this repulsive and formidable personage has led us far from Catt and Catt's

book, and for this we must apologise. We must also repeat that under present circumstances it is scarcely possible to judge Frederick impartially, for we regard him as not remotely the cause of the holocausts of to-day. But we further contend that it is well worth while for that very reason to investigate and analyse his sinister character, for if his spirit and example be allowed to permeate the world there is little hope for the future of mankind. Nations will become mere herds of wild beasts, preying on each other when occasion offers, and planning with bestial cunning the favourable opportunity for treacherous attack.

What is greatness? What is glory? These are the questions which arise on a contemplation of Frederick's life. He indeed had his full measure of glory and is usually designated as 'Great.' But his death was preceded by scores of thousands of others for which he was solely responsible, a gloomy and sorrowful procession of plain folk slaughtered because 'ambition, interest, the desire to make people talk about me' had let him seize without provocation or justification a province from a young woman unable at the moment to defend it. These souls surely await him at the gates of the future.

And at this time Howard in obscurity was lightening prisons and succouring hopeless pris-



oners. Jenner was ridding mankind of the loathsome scourge of small-pox. An obscure group of pious enthusiasts were striving to free the world from the curse of slavery. Wesley was bringing a new joy of hope and faith into the dark places of his country. No one called these men great and glorious for their poor achievements; they were merely preserving and solacing humanity, while the great and glorious were earning laurels by destroying it.

But history, when it is written in just proportion and with regard to the eternal truths which ultimately govern the world, may distribute its honours in a different spirit. Then these humble benefactors may rank higher than the wanton conqueror who, possessing consummate qualities of brain and fortitude, was a curse to his age and to his kind.

ROSEBERY.

*June 1916.*



## ROUGH DRAFT OF MY MEMOIRS

My aim in these memoirs is to write down what I saw and heard of the great Frederick during the period of twenty-four years in which he honoured me with an entire confidence. The kindnesses of this unique man, his cooling off towards me, so little expected, so little deserved, I venture to say—a coolness which lasted five years, up to the end of his life, will not influence my mind and heart. I will speak, independently of his kindness and of his rigour, with that honesty and truth which one owes to oneself and to others : nothing is so mean as adulation ; nothing so odious as blame dictated by resentment.

When we speak of a great man, my experience is that it is difficult not to speak of him with the enthusiasm of blame or of satire. Here in my writings will be found nothing but truth itself, and I flatter myself that by the favour of this truth the reader will be indulgent regarding the manner in which I shall present it to him.<sup>1</sup>

As I am not a soldier, I shall carefully refrain from speaking myself of that sublime art ; I should have too good reason to fear that our modern

<sup>1</sup> I would also ask him not to lose sight of this maxim : that to relate faithfully what one has heard said is often but reporting in good faith things that are at the least suspicious ; he will understand what I mean.

Turennes might rap me on the knuckles. If, however, I happen now and then to mention the marches of armies, battles and sieges, and to give decisions on these things, I shall be following the Turenne *par excellence*, who conversed with me about them, and gave me the decisions themselves.

As in these memoirs will be seen many scattered traits that might serve to characterise the Prince I speak of, I propose to collect them together at the end of my work. I will take Frederick to pieces, as Leibnitz had to be taken to pieces in order that he might be thoroughly made known to the world, and I will assemble all the traits of this decomposition in one picture which will definitely present this man, who has so greatly occupied the attention of the present generation, and who, in all probability, will interest future generations still more.

From this picture which I shall present to him, the reader will see, perhaps with some pleasure, how greatly the immortal Frederick resembles a prince of antiquity, to whom he often compared himself, putting before me himself the striking characteristics, as he said, of the resemblance.

If I speak of those whom I have seen about His Majesty and of myself, it is neither egoism, partiality, nor a critical spirit which dictates my language; I speak of them and of myself with the sole object of presenting to those who may wish to know Frederick, all his traits both in great and in small circumstances.

The King, who in 1755 had gone to Wesel to inspect the regiments of that town, suddenly decided to cross into Holland and to see the town of Amsterdam. He took with him only M. de Balbi, colonel of engineers, and that *valet de chambre*<sup>1</sup> who, during the war, was placed in a fortress.

I will not recall here all that the newswriters said about that journey; the most singular thing that happened to him, the King told me, in that famous town, was the reception accorded to him by a rich man, the owner of pictures.

“I have learned, sir, that you possess some fine pictures.”

‘That is so . . .’

“May I be permitted to see and admire them?”

‘Who are you, sir? I do not know you . . .’

“I am the first musician of the King of Poland.”

‘Very well, mister first musician, I am your obedient servant. I have no time to lose this morning. Come back this afternoon.’

He was not at home, and the King resumed his journey.

By one of those strange chances which link up the affairs of this world, I happened to be in the same boat that was taking the King to Utrecht. He had engaged the cabin of this boat, and he noticed me.

“What is your name, sir? Come in here; you will be more comfortable than where you are.”

<sup>1</sup> [Christian Friedrich Glasow.]

I entered, after having hesitated some time whether I should do so. He spoke of politics, philosophy, religion, of several of the governments and of several of the kings of Europe, and he spoke with so much volubility and in so decided a tone that I could not prevent myself from pointing out to him that so marked a decision did not agree with what he had told me of his entire ignorance of the country he was visiting.

“How can you live in this aquatic country? Are you remaining here for any further length of time?”

‘No, sir, I wanted to know the University of Utrecht, and I shall very soon have finished the courses of study which I had proposed to carry out under the famous professor Wesseling.’<sup>1</sup>

“I have heard that clever man spoken of with praise; but you will allow that all these people are pedants, this one perhaps less than another, since he does not call himself Wesselenius. As you are going to Utrecht, I shall have the pleasure of accompanying you there, and we shall have the opportunity of much further talk together.”

Indeed, he spoke a good deal about Wolff, about the principle of sufficient reason, about the principle of contradiction, and about pre-established harmony.

“Such as you see me, or perhaps judge me, I have studied these matters a great deal. My

<sup>1</sup> [Peter Wesseling (1692-1754), Professor of Political Law, History and Philology at Utrecht.]



parents did not like the decided taste I had for study; but I hoodwinked my parents; I studied and I am not sorry. The study of which I know least is politics; it is a study of deceit, agreeing very little with my character."

Conversing thus, we arrived at Utrecht.

"Good-bye, sir, I hope to see you again when passing back through this town. I will ask of your news. If also an inn supper would be agreeable to you, you would oblige me by staying a few moments longer with me, for I wish to start away in the night."

Engaged elsewhere, I could not accept this invitation. The King started off at three o'clock in the morning for Arnheim, having learned from his *valet de chambre* that it was known that he was the King of Prussia, and that the magistrate awaited him at the town gate to make his compliment. He started off immediately, putting Colonel de Balbi in the leading carriage and himself in the baggage carriage that followed it.

When they arrived at the town gate, the magistrate approached the carriage, harangued Colonel Balbi, and finished this fine harangue by crying out in unison with those accompanying him: 'God be praised that we see the defender of the Protestant Religion.' His Majesty, in the open carriage, had great difficulty in not bursting out into laughter.

The following day, I learned that this first musician of the King of Poland who had seemed to me so well informed, so lively, so argumentative,



was the King of Prussia. Six weeks later, I received a letter from Potsdam. His Majesty said therein that, if I wished to see again the traveller who had now and then trod on my corns, I should be welcome, that I had only to make my own conditions and to get ready to start off immediately after the reply to my letter, and that this reply would not be long in coming. I expressed my humble gratitude and my urgent desire to throw myself at the feet of him who had made so strong an impression on me on the boat, and said that I left him absolute master of my fate. After a very gracious reply, I was getting ready to start off, when an illness, which was believed to be a decline, prevented me from making the journey I desired ; I explained my state ; the King deigned to be sensible of it.

In the year 1757, after the taking of Breslau, His Majesty reiterated the proposals which he had already made to me. He told me that, if I were still of a mind to enter his service and were in a condition to make the journey, it would suffice if I repaired to Breslau in the beginning of March, 1758.

I set out and arrived in this town on the 13th March at about four o'clock. Soon afterwards, a groom of the King brought me the following letter from Councillor Eichel :

This 13th  
March, 1758.

‘I have the honour to acquaint you, sir, that, being aware of your arrival and having reported the same to the King, His Majesty

commands me to tell you that he expects you to-day at five o'clock, that is to say, immediately, so that he may speak with you, and I do this assuring you of the respect with which I am

EICHEL.

This 13th March, 1758,  
*citissime* to M. de Catt.'

I repaired to the castle, and was presented to the King by his aide-de-camp, M. d'Oppen, who retired immediately. I was startled by seeing this Prince so different from what I had seen him in the boat with his cinnamon-coloured coat and his great round wig.

"Ah, good evening, sir," he said to me, "good evening. I am very happy to see you again. Would you have recognised me?"

'Yes, Sire.'

"And by what?"

'By your eyes.'

"But I have grown very thin."

'That is true. It is even astonishing how Your Majesty can bear up under so many fatigues.'

"They are wearing in the extreme, and the life I lead is a dog of a life. You must be tired; sit down, and I will explain what my views are with regard to you. I want you to follow me and to keep me company during the time that this wretched war still lasts. I require only one thing from you, and that is that you serve me with that honesty which forms the base of your character.

I will not hide from you that I have informed myself exactly about you. My information has been to your advantage, so respond to the good impression that has been conveyed to me and which I have of you. It is especially important to me in the present circumstances to have around me honest souls. I have had so often near my person faithless and ungrateful people that, in truth, I begin to tire of men, and, indeed, I should become quite tired of them, if, because of a few honest persons, I did not forgive the wickedness of those who have played me most perfidious tricks. Go to-morrow morning and see Eichel. He will tell you what I wish to do for you. If you are satisfied with my proposals, you will oblige me very much by getting together as soon as possible the few things you require for a campaign, so that you may be able to join me a week hence at the convent of Grüssau to which I shall repair. As you desire to make a trip to your Switzerland, which is natural, the most favourable time will be in July, so that you will have need of but little baggage. I do not wish to detain you any longer. You must be tired. Good evening. Come and join me as soon as possible."

On the morrow, I saw M. Eichel, who in fact did make proposals to me which I accepted without knowing overmuch whether what was being given to me would be sufficient for my new kind of life.

'When I rejoin His Majesty,' said the councillor

to me, 'I will acquaint him with the readiness with which you accept the conditions, and I shall have the honour of writing to you on the subject.'

In effect, he sent to me from Grüssau under date of the 18th this letter :

'His Majesty, being satisfied with you and delighted to have you in his service, grants you the 900 crowns of which I spoke to you, and permission to repair for three months to Switzerland, but as the best and most convenient time for you to make this journey will be that of the beginning of the campaign operations, His Majesty desires that you should wait until that time, and that meanwhile you should join him at Grüssau, where his country quarters will be. Moreover, sir, as your campaign will not be long, for the two months' travelling you will be required to do, you will not need to procure for yourself an extensive equipment, the cost of which moreover His Majesty will defray.'

I replied to M. Eichel, begging him to place at the King's feet my gratitude, my joy at being in his service, and my eagerness to repair as soon as possible to the country quarters.

M. Eichel replied to me :

'I have placed before the King what you did me the honour to write to me. His Majesty has commanded me again to assure you that he is very pleased with your way of thinking



and acting, that in due course he will put you on a footing with which you will have every reason to be satisfied, and that he will do more for you than you hope for. He awaits you six days hence, for he wishes you to rest after your long journey and to get your equipment together at your leisure.'

The councillor, in order to press on my equipment and to get it completed at as little cost as possible, had directed and recommended me, before leaving, to His Excellency, M. de Schlabrendorff, secretary of state for Silesia and his intimate friend, as well as to several persons who might be of service to me. I remarked for the first time the influence of a cabinet secretary, and the feeling spread by a man whom it is known that the King wishes to bring near his person. People are eager to serve him, without knowing him, to devote themselves to him, to seek him out. They ingratiate themselves with him in all possible manners, inspiring him with good or bad opinions of those persons whom they like, hate, or fear. They show themselves as eager to cultivate a man who is imagined to be an object of favour, as they are cold when the master turns his back on the object of his choice.<sup>1</sup> In both cases are seen the same levity, the same pettiness, the same baseness. Therefore a man of honour and of principles will never be moved by these attentions, nor hurt to see them

<sup>1</sup> As happened during my stay to M. de B(albi).



end. He will consider himself happy to be esteemed and sought out only by the few who do not give themselves lightly in spite of favour, and who do not turn cold lightly either in spite of disgrace.

During the time I stayed at Breslau, I saw every day the honest Marquis d'Argens. He acted towards me in the manner he has ever used since. He showed me a thousand marks of friendship, and gave me the advice which he believed necessary for the new career in which I was about to enter.

'After your first interview with His Majesty, I passed the rest of the evening with him. He spoke to me of you,' said the good Marquis, 'in the most flattering and advantageous terms. That is fortunate; for when our philosopher (it was thus he called him) gets a good or bad idea of any one, he does not easily let go of it; what he decides is decided once for all and without appeal. If he thinks that a man has wit, oh, he is witty though the wind howl and the tide roar. If, unfortunately, he thinks him a fool, it is in vain for him to have ability, he will remain a fool in the King's eyes until the end of time. I am really interested in you, and this is my advice from my heart, which I devote to you: say little; be composed before our philosopher, without constraint and affectation moreover; enter as little as possible into jests; show small eagerness for the confidences which he may make to you and which he will make, I know it from the way he spoke about you to me, and

let that small eagerness be shown especially about what he may tell you of his family. Do not, for God's sake, criticise either his prose or his verse; don't ask him for anything, no money, and see only so far as politeness permits those whom he has decided are fools, rogues, intriguers, and carpers.'

I next saw Sir Andrew Mitchell, the envoy of the British court. I had been strongly recommended to him by General de Cornabe, his intimate friend and mine; so that he gave me, during the short stay I made at Breslau, the most touching marks of the interest he took in me. His well-informed, frank and civil conversation made a great impression on me, as well as the picture he drew for me of the present state of things. What he told me of the people whom I should see and avoid turned out to be in conformity with the exactest truth.

'However,' he said to me, 'you will be pleased with your situation. His Majesty is extremely taken with you. He told me at table on the day of your arrival that he was expecting you, and I took advantage of this opportunity to tell him all that my friend Cornabe, whom His Majesty esteems for his abilities, had already written to me about you. Without becoming too familiar with this Prince, be yet frank and open with him, and when you are together of an evening, always bring to the fore questions of literature, of philosophy, and especially of metaphysics, which he

likes very much. Discuss the French poets with him, and if he shows you any of his verses, criticise only in so far as he requires. Allow him to speak rather than speak yourself.' <sup>1</sup>

The abbé Bastiani, a Venetian, canon of the cathedral, came to see me, and very obligingly proffered me his services. He had already been described to me as a very shrewd man, a great hypocrite and seeker after honours, which he affected not to care about, loving to play a political part, and seeking out for preference ministers and those whom he believed to be at the back of things. As I was not acquainted with him, and knew very little also of those who judged him in such fashion, I rightly suspended my own judgment until I might be assured by what followed that the judgment I have quoted was or was not in conformity with the truth.

Having arranged my equipment, I left Breslau and arrived on the morning of the 21st at Grüssau, at the convent where His Majesty lodged in the apartments of the prelate. The King, informed of my arrival, sent his aide-de-camp general, M. de Wobersnow, to me. After very civil compliments on the part of this general, he informed me that he had orders to conduct me to his table, where all the aides-de-camp eat, to introduce me to them, to commend me to their kind attentions, and to help me in any difficulties I might have

This 21st  
March, 1758,  
Convent of  
Grüssau, of  
the Cister-  
cian Order.

<sup>1</sup> This worthy man has always been the same to me, up to the end of his days.

relative to the marches which we were about to make.

‘After dinner, sir, I will attend you to His Majesty, who expects you at three o’clock.’

I was accompanied there at that hour by the general, who, seeing His Majesty arrive, retired.<sup>1</sup>

“Ah, there you are,” he said, “I am very pleased to see you again, and I am obliged to you for your eagerness to be again with me. If you are not too tired, we will talk an hour together.”

As I assured him that I was by no means tired, my audience, which was to have lasted but an hour, was an audience of three and a half hours.

I should never have imagined the opening and the subject of the King’s conversation during all this time. My surprise equalled the satisfaction which I felt.

“Here you are, my dear sir, embarked on a career in which all will be new to you. A few rules will not be unhelpful to you. All that you will see or may guess perhaps of my operations, all must be held sacred by you, as well as what I may say to you which relates thereto. I often hide my designs from those who are about me. I even mislead them, because, suspecting what I have in mind, they might speak about it without seeing the consequences, and I should suffer. I can only save myself by secrecy.

<sup>1</sup> I have entered into these details up to this point in order to recall my *début*. It will be the last time on which I shall dwell at such length on that which concerns me.



“ You will be sought out on all sides. You will be flattered in order that you may give away what you may have heard from me, and what are the objects of my present occupations. I expect of your integrity that you should repulse these flatteries, and that you should satisfy in no possible manner this curiosity, which is inspired much more by malevolence than by the desire to know. Be certain that, in general, a bad use would be made of the details you might give. Be on your guard therefore.

“ I have in my suite several aides-de-camp whom I should like you to know, since they are those whom you will perhaps see for preference, as they are well educated. Oppen is a good fellow, and very brave, but excessively jealous of any preferences I may show for others. He is not a little occupied in silent efforts to stop them.

“ G(audy) is full of wit, parts and information, but he is always finding fault. These young people who have scarcely seen anything decide matters as if they had a consummate experience. You will as time passes often have occasion to observe that this taste for decision and criticism is rather common among my aides-de-camp. M(arwitz) is a man of superior parts, but he is a gloomy, cross-grained person, always discontented with what is done, and always very satisfied with himself. His heart is not made for friendship. The rest of my aides-de-camp more or less adopt the tone given them by the three men I have

described to you. See them all, and especially the latter, with every possible reserve. If you become too intimate with them, assuredly they will give you distastes for things and will inspire you with distrust and fear of myself and your present position. Take what I tell you for the truth. Speak out plainly and frankly to me on anything that may upset and embarrass you, and be assured that, if any one attempts to annoy you, I shall soon put a stop to it. Do not lend money to anybody, and, as far as possible, avoid all gambling games and noisy pleasures in which you may eventually be asked to join.

“When Sir Andrew Mitchell joins us, see him as often as possible. He is sincerely attached to me, and is a man of very solid and wide education. He is integrity itself. He is sometimes a little quick and sharp, it is true, but he easily recovers.”

Speaking of Sir Andrew Mitchell, he told me the following story of one of his sallies which had contributed not a little to increase the esteem in which the King held him. At Breslau, dining with the King, certain generals were singing the praises of the campaign of 1757 which had just been finished.

‘What a glorious campaign!’ said one.

‘Nothing in the annals of the world equals it,’ said another.

‘What numerous volumes could be written about the reign of Your Majesty!’ cried out a third.

Sir Andrew Mitchell, tired of these speeches and of this praise to the King's face, said :

' Eh, gentlemen, the finest praise that could be made of the reign of a prince would be that which would be contained in a few lines.'

The generals looked at each other, and seemed to say, ' How can any one be so bold ? '

" M. Mitchell, you are right," said the King. " Nothing is more sensible or truer than your language, and if it is permitted me to add a word to the judicious reflection which you have just made, I will say that in my opinion the greatest prince is he who loves truth and seeks it. I place beside him the subject worthy of all respect who tells it to him."

After having given me this advice and depicted those with whom I was to live, His Majesty talked to me of his manner of life and of his occupations. " I am remaining here to cover the siege of Schweidnitz which is about to commence. I shall leave Grüssau to continue my operations as soon as the town is taken. During a campaign, I rise at three in the morning and sometimes sooner. It is often very painful to me, I confess to you, to get up so early. I should like to remain in bed a few moments longer, I am so fatigued, but my affairs would suffer for it. I arrange to rise with my lackey, who has orders to wake me and not to let me go to sleep again. Once risen, I do my own hair, dress myself, take a cup of coffee, and read my despatches. After having read them, I play

on the flute for an hour and sometimes more, turning over in my mind the while my letters and the replies I shall make to them. My secretaries come next, and I tell them what they have to write. That done, I read my old books, new ones but seldom, up to the time of parade, when I give the orders of the day. I read a little more just before dinner, which is fixed for noon exactly. I have usually several generals at my table, and at present the prelate of the convent. This man amuses me particularly by his ineptitude. During the whole meal, he is the object of my persiflage. I put thorny questions to him which he cannot solve. Then our prelate crosses himself prodigiously, and no doubt says to himself, 'Ah what a king he is; he will be infallibly grilled.' Imagine his stupidity! I asked him a day or two ago for a Greek Testament. 'What, Sire, you know Greek?'—'Indeed, yes.'—'When does Your Majesty require this Testament?'—'Bring it to me to-morrow when you come to dine.'

"The prelate brought me an enormous book. I opened it; it was the *Summa* of Saint Thomas. You can imagine that I did not spare him; so this holy man consigns me to all the devils. After dinner, I play on the flute to aid digestion; I sign my letters, and I again read until four o'clock. At that hour, you will come to me; we will talk until six, when my little concert begins. If passable music can amuse you, it only depends on you to hear it; everything is over at half-past



seven. After the concert, which I only have in country quarters, I pitilessly scribble paper with prose and verse until nine o'clock, when I put myself into the arms of Morpheus. That is my manner of living. It is what it will be at Potsdam, or very nearly, in peace-time, if it is given to you as well as to me to see that inestimable boon, and, sir—but I have kept you too long. Good evening, good evening. I am ashamed of so much chatter. Until to-morrow then at about three o'clock. I will introduce you to a captain, M. Guichard, who is entering my service. He is a learned man who was for a long time reader at the University of Leiden. Having tired of waiting so long for the chair of professor of Greek which had been promised to him, he left the academic college and his dear companions in *us* to become a soldier. We shall see what he can do."

On the following day at three o'clock I repaired to His Majesty's quarters, as he had commanded me the day before. He began about his journey in Holland: "Tell me truthfully, for whom did you take me?"

This 22nd  
March, 1758.

'For a French nobleman, very well-informed, very hasty, and very positive.'

"Well-informed I am rather, hasty very, perhaps too much; as for being positive, that is surely not a defect of mine. I put on the tone of positiveness which shocked you."

'It is precisely that tone which would have put me on the track.'

“ Was it very marked then ? ”

‘ Very marked.’

“ But in what way ? ”

‘ In speaking of the great, of princes, of kings, your dear brethren, and of governments with which you said you were not well acquainted, in censuring princes who did not protect the art of letters, it escaped you to say : For my part . . .’

“ What, you noticed that *for my part* ? ”

‘ Doubtless, for you stopped, and it was only the moment after that you finished your sentence. “ For my part,” you said, “ I have nothing to do with such princes ; they are none of mine.”— “ There are certain of them, however, who very much favour the art of letters and those who cultivate the art.”—“ Yes, they say that the King of Prussia is of this number, that he writes himself, or rather that he scribbles over a lot of paper with prose and verse, but he is not a man after my heart.”—“ Why is he not ? ”—“ Because a king who is an author is a difficult, exacting being, who often neglects for letters the affairs of his State, which for preference deserve all his cares and all his attention, and because he is or runs the risk of being a greater pedant than all the pedants of the universities. I will perhaps visit Prussia, after having gone through Holland, and will then see what is the truth about this lord who is so much spoken of, and who, from what I have learned, has every appearance of giving still further occasion to talk about him. If on my return I have the

pleasure of seeing you again in these regions, I shall be able to tell you what sort of a man is this King of Prussia.” ’

His Majesty often returned to these boat conversations, which had, he said, particularly amused him.

“I once,” he continued, “took a trip to Strasburg under the name of the Count du Four, a rich nobleman of Bohemia. I took Algarotti only with me.<sup>1</sup> This journey was tragi-comical. I have described it in verses which Voltaire commended. You see from this approbation that I am not such a bad poet as you might believe.<sup>2</sup>

“On the first day of my arrival, being at *table d’hôte*, an officer seated beside me asked me, speaking of Algarotti, who that gentleman was. ‘That gentleman,’ I said, ‘is an Italian from Italy.’ The officer got angry. ‘Are you making fun of

<sup>1</sup> I have been assured that His Majesty took with him on this journey his brother, the Prince of Prussia; if that is so, I do not know why he did not mention him to me.

<sup>2</sup> He recalled the verses which he composed about this journey :

Les uns nous prenaient pour des rois,  
D’autres pour des filous courtois,  
D’autres pour gens de connaissance ;  
Parfois le peuple s’attroupait ;  
Entre les yeux nous regardait ;  
En badauds curieux, remplis d’impertinence,  
L’or, plus dieu que Mars et l’Amour,  
Le même or sut nous introduire  
Le soir dans les murs de Strasbourg.

[‘Some took us for kings, others for courteous thieves, others for acquaintances; sometimes the people gathered round; stared into our faces; like curious gapers, full of impertinence, gold, more god than Mars and Love, the same gold procured us our entry in the evening into the walls of Strasburg.’] He dictated them to me; his memory surprised me very much.

me,' he said, 'and what sort of a reply is yours meant to be?' Algarotti, seeing that the matter might become serious, spoke to the officer with so much politeness that he softened and cheered him, and the dinner was finished by the cracking of a good many bottles of champagne.

"Having made several acquaintances in this town, I invited them to dinner. The Duke de Broglie, who heard of this invitation, said to several of those invited: 'At least, gentlemen, take care. He is a foreigner who is inviting you to play and to win your money.' In a company into which I was invited, it was proposed that I should take part in a game. 'I never play, gentlemen. My father, in permitting me to travel, forbade me absolutely to play at any game of cards whatsoever. I am a much too respectful son not to follow the orders of my dear father.' This was reported to the Duke de Broglie. 'Oh, that is just cunning. I repeat, take care of yourselves.' A knave of a drummer, who had been in a regiment at Potsdam, recognised me, and said to the Duke: 'That foreigner, my lord, is the King of Prussia.'—'You are an impostor; it is not true.'—'Nothing is more true, my lord.' The Duke invited me to pass the evening with him and a select company. When I arrived, I saw my duke in the corner of his room, holding the drummer by the arm, and saying to him so that I could hear him: 'Rascal, speak—is *that* the King of Prussia?'—'Indeed, my lord, yes, it is himself.' Then the



Duke came up to me with a serious air : ‘ I am a marshal, sir ; I have an order, as you see, and I have seen the best governments of France. I am assured that you are the King of Prussia ; is that true ? ’—‘ I, a king, sir ? You are making fun of me. I am a good and honest gentleman who has been permitted by his father to see the great towns and great men, like M. le Maréchal.’—‘ Well, then, you are his brother.’—‘ I assure you that that is not so.’—‘ You know him then ? ’—‘ No better than you yourself can know him.’—‘ Madam, you see how a man can lie,’ cried the Marshal, hurling furious looks at the poor drummer whom he had forced to remain in a corner of the room. I made up my mind at once, and going out a few moments later I started off immediately.”

The King delighted to describe this scene, and each time he described it, he gave me a lesson on the danger there is, especially when travelling, in playing bad jokes on people whom you do not know, jokes which are not even tolerable with the best of friends.

A moment after the story of this journey to Strasburg, Captain Guichard was announced. He said, in presenting himself, how delighted he was to serve under so great a prince, whose exploits were so much spoken of.

“ But, sir, for one who comes from a university you say very fine things. The son of Monsieur Diafoirus <sup>1</sup> did not express himself better than you.”

[<sup>1</sup> Molière, *Le Malade Imaginaire*.]

‘ I say true things, Sire.’

“ On the report Hellen made to me about you, I have taken you into my service. You will follow my army and remain at headquarters, until I know you better and place you. To-morrow you can go to Breslau to get your equipment, but arrange matters so that you will be back here before the end of the siege. I have run over your work on the warfare of the ancients, but tell me, sir, why is the preface as well written as the work is badly written ? ”

‘ The preface was written for me, and I composed the work.’

“ Who wrote the preface ? ”

‘ Maubert.’<sup>1</sup>

“ Maubert, that unfrocked monk ? Where the deuce did you make the acquaintance of that scoundrel who hires himself out for a price to write lampoons on princes ? ”

‘ In London.’

“ Apparently, in a brothel ? ”

‘ Assuredly not, Sire. I came to know him in a singular fashion, but I should tire Your Majesty with the story of it ? ’

“ Oh, you would not tire me. It will be amusing, I am sure, and as it will certainly be ridiculous, we shall laugh.”

‘ I was coming away from a supper and near my own lodgings, when I heard some frightful cries. I went forward, and found somebody trying to violate a lady’s chambermaid.’

<sup>1</sup> [Jean Henri Maubert de Gouvest, military writer (1721-67).]

“Assuredly, it was Maubert.”

‘No, Sire, at bottom he is too honourable a man . . .’

“He, honourable? Well, well.”

‘I went to her rescue, and a moment afterwards an unknown man passed and joined with me in the attempt to save the honour of the poor girl, who was already at the last extremity. This unknown person was Maubert. We took the chambermaid home to her lady’s, and, in leaving her, I told her my name and the name of my lodging. I begged Maubert to step home with me. After having jested about our adventure, I spoke to him of the book I was working on; and it was thus we made acquaintance.’

“Have you had since no news of your distressed damsel? This all seems very admirable.”

‘Yes, Sire, on the following day, the chambermaid came to tell me on the part of her lady that she would be delighted to make the acquaintance of so gallant and so resolute a man as myself.’

“Bravo! You therefore went to see the lady, and she fell into a fine passion for you?”

‘Yes, and a very strong one. She wished to marry me, but, as all the arrangements were coming to a conclusion, she was attacked by small-pox, and my worthy, respectable lady died.’

“Ah, M. Guichard, was it not the younger sister who caused this sad death?”

‘Oh no, Sire, I declare to you, it was the elder sister.’

The King was laughing during the whole of this fine story.

“ You have delightfully amused me. Does one learn to narrate so finely at Leiden ? I reproach myself however for having recalled to you so bitter a grief, and, to divert that grief, let us speak a little about your book. You believe then that the Roman soldiers alone were brave, alone able to endure so many fatigues, to make such great marches, and to bear such great loads, and that my soldiers fade at all points before those of Rome ? ”

‘ I believe, Sire, that your soldiers are as brave as the Romans were, but, as regards marches and the weight they had to carry, the Romans, without contradiction, carry the palm.’

“ Without contradiction ! Don’t decide so quickly, mister unfortunate lover of a lady. You will see our marches and you will learn to know what the load of a Prussian soldier is when marching. Good-bye, gentlemen. You, unfortunate lover, former secretary of the great Cæsar, go and arrange your equipment, and you, Catt, return to-morrow at the same hour.”

The captain attended me to my lodgings, and stayed there a few moments.

‘ It must be agreed,’ he said, ‘ that this very enlightened Prince is very gay, very polite, very accommodating, very pleasant and very amiable.’

‘ I agree with all that, sir. Although I have not the honour of your acquaintance, I will impart to you some advice given to me, which I perceive



is both necessary and useful, and that is to give as little occasion as possible to anything that might serve the King as a subject of persiflage, for he loves it, and often pushes it rather far.'

'Yet, as you saw, he laughed very much at my adventure.'

'That is precisely what pained me for you, as well as the praise of the strength of the Roman soldier, on which you insisted too much. The King appeared to me to be serious.'

'But this praise is merited.'

'That may be, and it is precisely because you believe that such is the case that you should not have dilated on it, but have let your book speak.'

The following day, His Majesty asked me what I thought of his captain.

The 23rd March. Continuation of the conversations I had with the King up to our departure from Grüssau on the 19th April.

"Allow that he is ridiculous, and that he will give us much occasion for laughter."

'He seemed to me well informed, well versed in Roman antiquities, very zealous for your service.'

"That is true, but he has no knowledge of the world or of the right thing to say. I assure you, he will amuse me."

'But, Sire, it seems to me that a learned man can certainly be forgiven some things. Your Majesty, who loves letters, should be more indulgent than others to accents which are not precisely those of society.'

"That is true; and, therefore, in spite of what I say to you, I have this indulgence for pedants and their accents and I never banter them if

otherwise they possess useful knowledge and a worthy character. Without this character, without virtue, even the widest learning is like sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. You see, sir, that I still know my passages of Scripture.

“The world has produced no finer genius than Voltaire, but I despise him supremely, because he is not upright. If he had been, what a superiority he would have had over everything that exists! It seems that nature, in refusing to these geniuses the virtue which would have embellished them, desires to compensate by this refusal those who have no talents or have only mediocre ones. Thus Newton, annotating the Apocalypse, consoles men who are inferior to him in genius.

“As I am talking about this Voltaire, I will tell you of his quarrel with Maupertuis. At a supper with me, Voltaire was infinitely amiable. He surpassed himself, told us charming stories. Maupertuis could not say a word. The supper finished, Voltaire, Maupertuis, d’Argens and two officers were walking up and down my garden. The marquis and the officers said to Voltaire: ‘How delightful you were at supper, and how you amused us! Is not that so, M. de Maupertuis?’—‘No, for he bored me to death.’—‘That does not surprise me,’ said Voltaire, ‘for you are a boring man.’  
*Hinc lites, my dear sir, hinc Akakia.*

“The knave had promised me solemnly that he would not print this diatribe, which is by the way full of wit, truth and of good jests. He had

even given me this promise in writing, and the rogue sent it to a printer.

“Annoyed at this bad faith, and carried away by a movement of anger, I had this diatribe burned. After the burning, I was sorry for it, as I was sorry in what followed for having mixed myself up with the literary and academic disputes of these two madmen. To repair a little of the evil done and to appease Voltaire, I sent the Abbé de Prades to him. I commanded the abbé to say pleasant things to him, and to report to me how he had taken them. The abbé arrived; Voltaire came up to him with a furious expression, which became still more furious when the abbé gave him my compliments. ‘What, burn me! What, prefer to me that rogue and that Laplander,<sup>1</sup> Maupertuis, to me who was on such good terms with the King of France, my master, and who so stupidly preferred to him this vandal King who sends you! Ah, the b——, the b——, the Archduke Joseph will avenge me!’ The abbé, who came to me immediately after this fine scene, described it to me without missing anything; and I laughed with my whole soul. On the following day, I sent the abbé to ask news of the health of my faithless poet, who knew or suspected that the abbé would come again. What did the author of *Mérope* then do? He ordered a bath, had put in it the potherbs destined for his soup, and when the abbé arrived: ‘Come here, sir, come; see what this man has

<sup>1</sup> [Referring to Maupertuis’s journey to Lapland.]

reduced me to! He is killing me, M. l'Abbé, and I loved him, was faithful to him, corrected his insipid prose and his prosy verses, but he will not escape me, the wretch.' This second scene, which was rendered to me exactly, made me laugh still more, as you may imagine. There is nothing more comical, my dear sir, than this Voltaire before an illness or the idea of death. My imbecile is then the plaything of panic terrors. He paints for himself a thousand devils waiting ready to seize him. You will certainly hear said, when he is on the point of death, that he had all the confessors and all the priests come to him. He will dishonour us all; never was there a man less consistent than he.

“As for myself, I am and shall remain firm in my principles. I do not fear death, but pain :

La douleur est un siècle et la mort un moment.<sup>1</sup>

“I only fear when, looking within myself, I see that I have transgressed the laws of that eternal morality which we should all practise for its own sake. I fear then the shame which there is in having transgressed against oneself and others, and I cast about to repair the evil I have done. I have no need for this purpose of your religious principles.<sup>2</sup> If I had principles like yours, I should quit my crown and live like an anchorite.

La crainte fit les Dieux, la force fit les rois.<sup>3</sup>

Be sure of that.”

<sup>1</sup> [‘Pain is an age but death a moment.’—Gresset, *La Chartreuse*.]

<sup>2</sup> He spoke otherwise on many disastrous occasions.

<sup>3</sup> [‘Fear made the Gods and force made kings.’]



‘I am of the truth of the end of the verse, but I cannot admit the truth of the beginning. The existence of a God rests on another principle than that of fear.’

“Oh, you wish to convert me; you will not succeed. I remain steadfast in my ideas.”

I had occasion to remark frequently that, far from being steadfast in that idea and in others, he was often in the strangest state of vacillation.

“After having depicted Voltaire to you as wicked, faithless and dangerous, I will say a word or two about those who formerly composed my literary society.”

He was at this point, when a letter was brought to him. He saw the seal and cried: “Ah, Catt, it is from Voltaire. He still remembers then that I exist.”<sup>1</sup> He opened and read or rather devoured with his eyes this letter. After having read it at different times, he handed it to me.

“How that man knows how to say agreeable things; nobody can write better! What a pity that he cannot be trusted! This letter gives me particular pleasure, I confess. In replying to him, I will send him my two odes of which I read the rough sketch to you. But before sending them, I wish to finish them. I am sure he will be pleased with them.”

Hearing this language, I remembered what the

<sup>1</sup> I have consulted my notes, and find that it was at Rammenau on the 26th September that His Majesty received a letter for the first time from Voltaire, and told me what I have set down. I will quote the reply made to him.

King had just said to me of the bad faith of him whose praise flattered him so much, and this gave me no little surprise. The King perceived my serious face.

“What is the matter?” he said.

‘But, Sire, if Voltaire is as wicked as you say, will he not make bad use of certain strophes of the Ode to the French (“flétri de plus d’une marque”<sup>1</sup>) and of certain lines of the Ode to the Germans? Would not Your Majesty be grieved if he abused your confidence?’

“He will be very careful not to show my verses. It might be imagined that he wrote them, and that will hold him back. No, as he shows regret and a lively desire to correspond with me, he will not think of playing me any new tricks.”

‘I wish it so with all my heart.’

“Good evening. I will speak to you to-morrow of my other fine wits, who are inferior to Voltaire.”

He began on the following day with Maupertuis.

“This man has talent and solid information, but his sometimes singular imagination often leads him astray, and makes him admit the strangest and most incongruous ideas. Yet he tries to enslave everybody to his ideas, and is seriously annoyed when they are not admitted. Jealous of the slightest preferences that I may show for those who approach me, he treats them with ill-humour, and, would you believe it, he sulks to me. His ambition is extreme, and his genius does not corre-

<sup>1</sup> [‘Branded with more than one mark.’ See vol. ii. pp. 18-21.]

spend. He is brusque in his manner, and often ridiculous with his gigantic opinions, but his heart, which is honest, is not to be compared with that of Voltaire. You know what Piron replied one day to the latter, who had offered him his heart: 'Come, come, M. de Voltaire, you are giving me the worst part of yourself.'

"Algarotti is a man of great intellect. He has taken from philosophy, literature and the fine arts all that is most interesting. No man—I except Voltaire, however—paid better than he in ready money in the different branches of human knowledge when asked his opinion on these different branches. A man of taste, of gentle mind, keen, shrewd, supple, but a great wheedler, and above all very selfish. He proved to have a sordid interest in an affair of the heart and an engagement he had with la Barbarini.

"La Mettrie, gay, humorous, thoughtless, had wit, some knowledge and an unruly imagination. He was so credulous that he believed everything you liked to tell him, and so mad that he wrote the most horrible things against people he did not know. If those whom he attacked complained, he made excuses to them and protestations that he would see about repairing the evil done: so he overwhelmed them with praises that they deserved as little as the horrid things he had given out. He was very disinterested, and was never more happy than when he had no money. He would then run naked about his room, smacking his buttocks

and saying, 'I have no money, bravo, I have no money.' However, he was a wretched —.

"The good and worthy Jordan was the friend I preferred. Although the great can count very little on the always interested friendship of those who approach them, I could rely on his, and on his uncommon integrity. His talk was frank and instructive. He had great knowledge of different literatures, but little taste. His heart was so tender that he was distressed in reading the gazettes which spoke of the horrors which were being committed in America. He wept over the fate of these unfortunates. 'Think of it, Sire, they have massacred there so many poor people in the most barbarous fashion; is it not horrible?' And he again burst into tears. My good Jordan feared death frightfully, and the pox gave it to him.<sup>1</sup>

"The Marquis d'Argens, whom you know, is integrity itself. I can count entirely on this integrity. He has much knowledge of literature. If he had more taste than he has, he might take rank with the good writers of the century. He is, as you will have remarked, always rather slovenly and greedy, but I forgive him these little defects because of the moral qualities I mentioned, which are so true, unadulterated and interesting. I like and esteem him from the bottom of my heart. We often dispute together, for he always thinks that he knows more than I. He gets annoyed when I

<sup>1</sup> I have never heard this, and I doubt it.



maintain the contrary; but he soon recovers from his annoyances, and he always ends the dispute by some Provençal jest.

“The Abbé de Prades has a mind naturally given to witty sallies, an astonishing thoughtlessness, a fundamental malice only to be found in priests. This malice has already brought upon him here with me many tiresome affairs. He has no knowledge of anything except ecclesiastical history, which he knows rather well. The marquis, who had suggested my taking this abbé, was surprised one day, when he had raised with him some point of literature, to meet with an entire ignorance. He enjoined him to read Rollin immediately. ‘Read him, read him day and night so that you may not be put to shame before the King, who, as he is at present reading this book, will most certainly speak to you about it.’

“This abbé cruelly deceived me, and I had him shut up in the fortress of Magdeburg, from which he will not come out until peace is made.

“Darget is a good fellow, ill-educated, but honest. You know that when the Austrians tried to carry off Valory from our headquarters, Darget told the hussars that he was Valory. He was led before Prince Charles; Darget said that he was my secretary and not Valory. This touch pleased me; and I therefore wrote my *Palladion*, in which I celebrate the adventure and laugh a little at the good Darget.

“I will recite this burlesque poem to you at

Potsdam, but shall we ever see Potsdam again? It is all well hidden in the dark future.

“D’Arnaud has talent, wit, and writes verses very prettily. There are some pieces by him that Voltaire might own to, but he is a great misanthrope; he sees everything gloomily. Some of his repartees astonish. One evening he and Voltaire were with me, and I spoke of the latter’s niece, Madame Denis: ‘Confess, Voltaire, that your niece is somewhat ridiculous.’—‘But she has a great deal of intellect and knowledge.’—‘That may be, and it is even said that it is precisely this intellect and knowledge which make her still more ridiculous.’—‘That is very true,’ then said d’Arnaud. Voltaire at these words, imagining that he was on the tragic stage, rose up on his heels: ‘What, Sire,’ he said in a majestic tone, ‘what, Sire, a niece whom I love and esteem is attacked thus in my presence; a league is formed against her; and you, little d’Arnaud, abortion of Parnassus, you to whom I gave your first idea of verse, you whom my niece picked up, whom she protected, whom she maintained in your indigence, go to, you are an ingrate and false-hearted.’—‘Your ridiculous niece,’ replied d’Arnaud, ‘was kind to me and I am sensible of it; therefore, in order to pay her for her kindness, I had to lie with her.’ Voltaire, usually so prompt in repartee, was so struck by this speech that he could not say a word. He remained as though petrified for some minutes,

and it pained me so much that, to put an end to this tragi-comical scene, I wished them both good evening.”

During my stay at the convent of Grüssau, up to the taking of Schweidnitz, the King read the *Analysis* of Bacon,<sup>1</sup> Cæsar, Tacitus, and a few volumes of Plutarch. They were his systematic readings. Every evening he spoke to me of what he had been reading during the day.

“ In talking to you of what I have read, I impress thoroughly on my memory the things I read, and I acquire thereby greater clearness of ideas and ease of expression.”

He corrected his two odes as many as three times, so that they might be worthy, he said, of being offered to the Patriarch of ‘Délices.’

Independently of these readings and of these compositions, the King often read to me the tragedies of Racine, his favourite tragic author. One day, raising his voice and rising with great vivacity to declaim the passages he knew by heart—and he knew many—a new lackey, who spoke French rather well and who was in attendance, believing that he was being called, from time to time interrupted the King, who in a tone of declamation sent him to all the devils.

‘ In truth, sir,’ said the lackey to me, when I left, ‘ I was in a fine fright. I thought truly that the King’s head was turned. If this continues, I very much fear that this sad thing will lead to

<sup>1</sup> He thought his method of getting on very odious.

an unlucky end. How he strode up and down, how he shouted ! ’

Each time he read me a tragedy, he always made this condition that he should be permitted to take a pinch of snuff at the end of each act.

“ I cannot go without this Spanish snuff ; it is a settled habit ; and I therefore soil my face and coat. It is disgusting. Agree, my dear sir, that I am almost as slovenly as our good marquis ? ”

Reading one day *Iphigénie en Tauride* by M. de la Touche, “ You will agree,” he said, “ that the verses and the dialogue do not approach those of Racine, and that I am perfectly right to read but seldom these new tragedies.”

As for the fifth scene, act iii., he read :

. . . Qu’avec étonnement il apprenne d’un roi  
Jusqu’où de l’amitié s’étend l’auguste loi.<sup>1</sup>

“ M. de la Touche, M. de la Touche, you must not trust too much to those b——. ‘ Friendship, the pleasure of great souls, friendship, which kings, those illustrious ingrates, are so unfortunate as not to know.’ That is truth, my dear sir, which I give you, and never forget it.

“ I have read you a play by a modern tragic writer ; I will now read my Racine to you, and we shall see the enormous distance there is between them.”

He took *Phèdre*.

“ This is a fine play, in which are united every

<sup>1</sup> [‘ That with astonishment he should learn from a king up to what point the august law of friendship extends.’]



possible interest and beauty. Thésée alone plays a silly part in it.”

The King, who often used to say that you must not subtilise in reading tragedies, or quibble and trifle about the expressions used, since it spoiled your pleasure, yet quibbled over what Racine makes Hippolyte say to Aricie : <sup>1</sup>

Ai-je pu résister au charme décevant ?

The King used to read : “ Ai-je pu résister au charme de-ce-vant, de-ce-vant, how pretty that is ! ”

And thus he always read that which he had no mind to approve.

When he was informed of the taking of Schweidnitz : “ Ah, that is news which is well worth my tragedy and the charming de-ce-vant. However, you will agree that it is cruel to send so many brave and worthy people into the other world, and why ? For a few wretched roods of earth and a few huts. I will write the history of this war, of which I have here my notes, as I wrote the histories of the wars of '40 and '44. I will read them to you, if we are ever happy enough to see our household gods again. It will be for my family and posterity, for whom I write, to judge me irrevocably. As for myself,

<sup>1</sup> *Phèdre*, scene 2, act ii. :

Quelles sauvages mœurs, quelle haine endurcie  
Pourrait, en vous voyant, n'être point adoucie ?  
Ai-je pu résister au charme décevant ?

[‘ What savage manners, what hardened hatred would not, seeing you, be softened ? Could I resist the deceptive charm ? ’]

my dear sir, I judge myself each day with every possible rigour. I am well aware that we Don Quixotes sometimes make stupid blunders, and I confess it gracefully, and this confession will facilitate the belief in the good things I may have done. At least, my intentions have always been pure, and I have kept unceasingly on guard so that my mind might be as little as possible the dupe of my heart, and the latter the dupe of the former.<sup>1</sup> Good evening, I have some arrangements to make and some letters to write, and an order to give, so that the amiable singer, de Fontenailles, my prisoner, may return to France on parole.<sup>2</sup> To-morrow I will begin your military course.

“As you will soon be running after noble adventures with us, you must know somewhat of what is happening, of what is being done, and of what might be done. What would they say of you, if, having been with me, you knew nothing at all concerning the trade we exercise, and if, on military subjects, you talk nonsense as Voltaire did. Think of it, he sent me an epistle on the dangerous art of destroying men, which he foolishly called my favourite art, and in this epistle there was a line that ran, *le boulet part, la poudre s'enflamme* (the cannon-ball flies, the powder lights). I put

<sup>1</sup> I would not say this to the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, who believed that the mind is always the dupe of the heart, and that thus we always overdo morality and create so little taste for it.

<sup>2</sup> Captain de Fontenailles, taken prisoner at Rossbach, wrote in verse a charming letter asking for his liberty, which His Majesty granted. This letter can be seen in the Collected Works.

underneath, 'the powder lights, the cannon-ball flies,' there, my learned soldier, is what you should write. He said to me one day: 'But, Sire, when you are fighting, are you not in a rage?'—'Not at all, it is then that you need the greatest calmness, and to have, if possible, the cool head of Marlborough.'—'But you call your battles heroic actions. In good faith, Sire, are they not the actions of cannibals? What a distance there is between you and us: you destroy the world, and we enlighten it. What saves you especially from being considered a cannibal is that like me you have the principles of morality, and that we follow them, you as a great man, and I as a humble admirer of Your Majesty.'

"To avoid these blunders of Voltaire, I will instruct you during the course of our campaign in so far as will be necessary for you to be able to speak about it. You should know, for the moment, that I have given the direction of the siege to my general, Treskow, who, with 20 battalions and 33 squadrons, began the investment<sup>1</sup> of the place. As the ground had not sufficiently thawed, we could not open the first parallel until the 1st April, and, on the 7th, the communication was finished. In the night of the 14th to the 15th, an assault was arranged, which succeeded admirably. The commandant, M. de Thürheim, sounded a parley, and capitulated on the same day. Beside my artillery which Sers had left there, when in

<sup>1</sup> He explained all these terms to me.

November last M. de Nadasdy took this place, we took 51 pieces of cannon and nearly 7000 firearms. We had the whole of the garrison prisoners of war, consisting of two generals, 168 officers and 4912 soldiers. That is enough for you to begin with. When you have been longer with me, I will tell you more.”

The 19th  
April, 1758.

On the 19th April, the King left Grüssau and made his headquarters at Schwenkfeld, near Schweidnitz. He saw in passing the siege works, of which Engineer-Colonel M. de Balbi had had the direction. The colonel, who showed everything that had been done, was welcomed with every mark of friendship and esteem. “You have done marvels, Balbi. I am more than pleased with you, and as a mark of my satisfaction and my gratitude, take this epistle which I wrote yesterday. I have done justice in it to your talents.”

I have only been able to recall the opening of this very singular epistle :

Recevez, mon cher Balbichon,  
Ces vers de ma muse charmée.<sup>1</sup>

In it, his superior abilities, his activity, his zeal were cried up, and he was congratulated because he would infallibly play a great part in the annals of the world, or, if, against the King's expectation, envy attacked him so that he did not shine in these annals, he would live always in the King's mind in brilliant and indelible outlines.

<sup>1</sup> [‘Take, my dear Balbi . . . chon, these verses from my delighted muse.’ It must be remembered that ‘Bichon’ means a lapdog.]



On the afternoon of our arrival at Schwenkfeld, I was called at three o'clock.

“I am now at the beginning of my campaign. God knows how it or I will end. Nothing is so cruel as to be compelled to wage war unceasingly, and the dolts of people believe me a happy mortal. I am not happy, even at my dear Potsdam, which I shall perhaps never see again. See what a treat it is for me ! Every morning, forty letters to read, the half of them say nothing, a quarter of them are of no importance or very thorny, and the remainder contain the most disagreeable news. You perhaps do not know me well yet, but be assured that I should like to be able to live like a private man, and that I should prefer to royalty that simple and retired life where you are your own master. I have lived on 1200 crowns ; I would consent to live on less to live quietly. A private individual can even live on 8 groschen a day. But I am building pretty fine castles in the air. I have a position to fill, a people I love ; God is my witness, I must remain at my post, bear the burden of it, cost what may, and sacrifice myself for this people whom I should like to make happy.”

At the end of this speech, he caused Captain Guichard to be called ; he entered.

“ Have you seen, sir, the siege works ? ”

‘ No, not yet, Sire ; I will see them to-morrow.’

“ But, Captain, you must never put off seeing until to-morrow what you can see to-day. For a raw provincial you have very little curiosity, Captain.”

The King called his attendants.<sup>1</sup> A grenadier of the first battalion entered, who placed in the King's chamber, without saying a word, all the equipment of a soldier. The grenadier retired.

“ You told me at Grüssau that a Roman soldier carried much more than ours. As we must not decide these questions lightly, I have had brought here all the equipment of a Prussian soldier, so that you may convince yourself whether your decision was just.”

I was uneasy for the poor captain, who, I was certain, was going to be quizzed. And, in fact, the King placed him in the middle of the room, made him stand like a soldier who is being drilled, raised his chin, put a hat on him as it should be, pressing it well down on his head, girded him with a sabre, put a cartridge-pouch on him in which there were sixty cartridges, a knapsack, gave him a gun, making him hold it as it should be held. After having thus dressed up the captain, His Majesty said in a laughing voice :

“ It must be allowed that you look well ; you look exactly like a Prussian soldier. You will see, you will prefer him to your Romans. Hasn't the Captain, Catt, the look of a real *old soldier*, as the Marquis says ? ”

I did not reply. The King could see from my face that this farce distressed me both for him who played and for him who suffered it.

<sup>1</sup> Apparently the King had given instructions as to what should be done when he called.

“ You are not laughing,” he said.

‘ No, Sire.’

“ And why ? ”

‘ Because M. Guichard seems to me to have gone pale.’

“ Oh, pale ; he is pale with the pleasure he feels in seeing himself as a big grenadier ; but I want to read you a letter I received yesterday evening from The Hague, from a man of importance.”

In this letter, means were proposed to the King to engage Holland in the war, should Prince Ferdinand push the French back across the Rhine.

“ What do you say to that ? ”

And from time to time he gave a surreptitious glance at the captain.

“ Why should I force these Dutchmen to enter into our quarrels ; what evil have they done that I should draw them in ? Should they not remain masters of their decision to act or not according to the welfare of their State ? Will these devils of politicians never get it into their heads that international affairs must be conducted in good faith, and that the quiet of those who, for their greater advantage, are interested in preserving the peace of their country must be respected ? I suffer too much from the evils of war to engage unscrupulously other powers to share them with me.”

At length, after these fine speeches, so moral and so philosophical,<sup>1</sup> and three good quarters of

<sup>1</sup> And things relative to the weight borne by and to the situation of the said captain,

an hour of an audience so painful in many respects for the captain, His Majesty went up to him, and himself took off the equipment with which he had loaded him.

“ Well, sir, do you find that the load of my soldiers is tolerable ? Do you think it approaches that of the Roman soldier ? ”

‘ I do think so,’ he replied with a sad and dreamy air, which gave me infinite pain.

“ Now, sir, we are going to do some long marches. I hope you will agree that they are as heavy as those done by the Romans, and that you will see operations of which they had not and could not have any idea. Adieu, sir. Be a little Prussian, and you will have reason to be pleased with me.”

“ You will agree,” said the King then to me, “ that you can only judge of certain things by comparison. Our friends, the authors, decide things in their study, and it is well to correct their ideas by practice. Don’t you think that our captain will no longer pass judgment, if he ever writes again, so lightly as he did, after the experience he has been put through, which seemed to me to sadden him somewhat ? I am firmly persuaded that he will not speak any more of marches and loads.

“ I have corrected my two odes. To-morrow, I will look them over again, for the very best must be sent to the Patriarch of literature. He often told me what I should do to write well in verse and in prose, how I must be pitiless over my com-



positions. He was very severe with me, I assure you, when I sent him my compositions. He used to put underneath: 'Pooh, this is the most worthless stuff, and should be wiped out for ever; this can pass; this is tolerable; these lines are good'; and he made me rewrite as many as twenty times, until it was good, and even then he would write to me: 'How is it possible that you can write these four lines which are admirable, and that the rest should be so bad? Make yourself a dictionary of rhymes.' I followed his advice, and I began my dictionary before the battle of Leitmeritz, and I am continuing it in the moments left me by the clash of affairs."

My audience over, I went to my lodgings, where I found Captain Guichard, who was waiting to speak to me of what had just happened to him.

'Did not the King say anything to you?'

'Nothing—but he seemed sorry for having subjected you to such a proof.'

'He, sorry! Believe me, he can feel neither sorrow nor humanity. I degrade him from his title of philosopher. The Eastern Solomon would not have acted thus. You must be a Northern Solomon to see in cold blood an honest man suffer as I have done. His soldiers are not so good as the soldiers of ancient Rome.'

'Think it, but don't say it to him again, or fear another similar experience.'

'Tiberius would not have kept me thus an hour at attention.'

The 21st  
April.

On the 21st, we set out for Nimptsch, a very little town. The King, seeing, during the march of the army, a packhorse bending beneath its load, asked General de Wobersnow, his aide-de-camp general: "Who has been simple enough to load a poor beast thus? It can never reach its destination."

The general, to make the King laugh, and laugh at my expense, told him that the horse belonged to me.

"It can easily be seen," he said, laughing, "that this is the first time he makes a march. How amusing."

Called after dinner, His Majesty came up to me as I entered, bursting out into great fits of laughter. The more I appeared astonished at this laughter, the more he laughed.

"Oh dear, oh dear, is it possible?" and the laughter went on. Finally, this scene, which began to alarm me, came to an end, after having lasted more than half an hour.

"How is it possible that, having understanding and intelligence, a man can load a poor packhorse to the point of breaking its back?"

'I do not understand what Your Majesty does me the honour to say to me.'

"But it was your packhorse which was veritably bending beneath the weight of its load; Wobersnow told me."

'I am annoyed that Your Majesty's aide-de-camp general, not knowing apparently how to entertain

Your Majesty, should have concocted so childish a story, which is untrue. My packhorse carried only a simple mattress and a small portmanteau. My other packhorses, being sick, were sent to Schweidnitz with all my baggage. That is the truth. The general could very well have refrained from amusing Your Majesty at my expense.'

"It is too bad," he said, "I will tell him so."

I reported the whole of this conversation to the general, and very urgently begged him not to make any more jokes of the kind. This general, at bottom, was a good man, very brave, but very limited; and therefore often sought to amuse the King, who desired nothing better than to be furnished with opportunities to satisfy his decided taste for persiflage.

During this audience at Nimptsch, he spoke to me of the education of children.

"Before all, one should endeavour to make them reasonable, to give them a sense of right. For this purpose, less time should be devoted to teaching them a great deal than to teaching them in a clear and distinct manner what it is desired that they should retain. You should often go over what they have learned, give them an accurate idea of words, and especially make a pleasure of their studies, which children have little love for. This is the plan I drew up for the education of my nephew. Above all, they should not be punished. If they do anything silly, well, then, they will amend by seeing the consequences of their follies. I do

not desire that my nephew should be shown too much deference. I make all the generals pass before him, and if they show him too much respect, I make them aware that this displeases me. Princes learn only too quickly that they are princes. They should learn before all that they are men, and that they have need of men ; it was thus that I was brought up. Generally, teachers of youth succeed as little in forming good men as do moralists in correcting morals. Both moralists and teachers are always beyond the bounds of humanity. Moralists should all be good doctors ; before talking morality, they should give good physical remedies. So long as the passions are not calmed, a moralist will always talk in vain.

“ The great point in leading men is to know their tastes, their opinions, their weak spot, for we all have a weak spot, and this is the string of the harpsichord which must be plucked, if you wish to have what you desire.

“ My grandmother of Hanover<sup>1</sup> said one day to the Marquis Desalleurs : ‘ How is it possible that so many of your beautiful French ladies allow themselves to be seduced ? ’ — ‘ Why, jewels, madam. ’ — ‘ Good, who would give herself for jewels. ’ — ‘ Why, then, a hundred thousand crowns. ’ — ‘ Fie, what an infamy to sell oneself for money. ’ — ‘ Why, then, a fine pearl necklace . . . ’ — ‘ Ah, sir, have done, you will say so much that I will have nothing more to say to you. ’

<sup>1</sup> [Queen Sophie Charlotte.]



“My grandmother loved pearls particularly; they were her passion. That is how we are made: you and I like the rest, weak, imperfect; but would it have cost the divinity any more to have made us better and more reasonable, and fitter thus for happiness?”

‘No doubt He could have done so, but this did not apparently enter into the plan of our world.’

“Ah, that is Pope. Let him argue. This system of the best world would lead us too far. Let us try to know men, and take them for what they are. Good evening.”

On the 22nd, the King started from Nimptsch This 22nd April. for Münsterberg; he was stopped on the way at Heinrichau, a convent of Cistercian monks. These monks harangued His Majesty, and wished him a successful campaign.

“If your desire is sincere,” he replied, “you will have reason to be pleased with me; but if you are feigning this sentiment, if you give news of me to my enemies, as some of your confraternity have wickedly done, I will have you all hanged without mercy.”

They protested their honesty and past fidelity, and swore an inviolable fidelity for the future. They offered a fine collation to the King’s suite. One of the monks said to the aide-de-camp, de Marwitz: ‘His Majesty is very gracious; it is a pity he is so ready to have people hanged.’

At about 11 o’clock we arrived at the little town of Münsterberg, where the headquarters were. In

this place, I made the acquaintance of General de Lentulus and of Colonel de Schwerin who commanded the *gens d'armes*.

After dinner, His Majesty began by speaking to me of these two officers, with whom he had from the window seen me conversing for some length of time.

“You had a long talk with Lentulus<sup>1</sup> and Schwerin. What did they say to you?”

‘They congratulated me on my good fortune in being in your service; they spoke to me of their zeal for Your Majesty; and said that you exposed yourself to perils too much on days of skirmishes and battles.’

“Lentulus is an excellent officer whom I stole from Austria, brave, intelligent. He is an offshoot of those ancient Swiss, your compatriots. When you have seen him oftener, he will tell you how we live together, and how steadfast I am in the friendships I make. Schwerin is also a good fellow, who knows his business well.<sup>2</sup> He has the bravery of Lentulus; he is somewhat of an original, and sometimes I treat him as though he were a rogue; he complains; he gets angry, and clutches the tail of my coat. He even says that I am ungrateful, that there is no one more devoted than he, and none whom I do not treat better than him. We finish, he by great protestations, and I by

<sup>1</sup> He gave me advice which he has hardly followed himself.

<sup>2</sup> The aim of M. de Schwerin was to make the King laugh; this aim was intentional, of which the King had no suspicion. I will give a few examples in what follows.

deep bows and doubts on his attachment for me. 'Are you not ashamed,' he says, 'to use such language to me?' And away he goes. I call after him in vain; he pretends not to hear.

"Lentulus and Schwerin told you that I exposed myself too much; and why should I not expose myself, when so many brave people brave perils for me and for their country? And, too, my dear sir, if you keep by me any length of time in this war, you will see that I must expose myself. Every prince who is compelled to make war and who does not share its danger is unworthy of any interest in his fate; he covers himself with an indelible disgrace.<sup>1</sup> I do not say, however, that a king should expose himself like a grenadier. He should never forget that he is the head of a body of men who place their confidence in his cleverness and in his prudence. He must take care of his days for their sake; but if the danger is extreme, if he must sacrifice himself, his honour and intelligence will let him know the times when he should make this sacrifice, and he should not hesitate to offer it for the safety of the country and of his honour. All my staff of officers is, generally, very well composed. There are some of them who are capable of leading an army, and of making excellent plans of campaign, and how many are there whose merit I do not and cannot know? If it pierces through and comes to my knowledge, I push him

<sup>1</sup> Quoted the examples of Philip v. and the Archduke who wrangled for Spain.

forward in an eminent way, and it is thus that I excite that emulation so necessary everywhere, and especially in the profession of arms. It is here that you must be careful not to humiliate men of merit; I am therefore very attentive, scrupulous even, to praise that which should be praised. Officers who apply themselves, who study to improve, who show intelligence, are assured that, with me, their efforts are not lost; they know even that I make it a pleasure to instruct and direct them.

“My troops are good and well disciplined. I make them contract the habit of everything they have to carry out; that is the great point. You do more easily, better and with greater courage what you know you will do well. I encourage my soldiers; I touch their honour; I give them rewards; I promise them rewards to egg them on, when necessary.

“After the battle of Breslau, they were afraid of cannon. I promised 100 ducats for each cannon that a soldier took, and that had an admirable effect, so advantageous is it to know the hearts of men, and what can determine them to do their duty. Cannon, my dear sir, decides everything. M. de Turenne boasted of his splendid artillery, which consisted of only 17 pieces of cannon. What would he say of us who have each of us more than 200? I would wager nearly always to win a battle, but at present we can do nothing against this frightful artillery.”



During this stay of three days at Münsterberg, His Majesty read me his poem on war.

“I have had to contend with great difficulties. Nothing is more difficult than to put into good verse the precepts of an art, whatever it may be. I have got over these difficulties rather well, and my authority for saying that is Voltaire, who has complimented me on my success. It is not a little thing, my dear sir, to win the approbation of a great poet who never flatters, and who is very severe in this matter. I have given myself up too much perhaps to poetry and eloquence, but they are a relaxation; with them, I am never bored, and I can do without everybody. Do not think that I attach any great value to what I do. Not at all; if I have the passion for authorship, I have assuredly not its arrogance.”

From Münsterberg, the King made an excursion to Glatz, to deceive the enemy, he said.

“I shall be able to tell you in five days whether I shall be fortunate or unfortunate.”

On the 25th he marched with the advance-guard, and his headquarters were at Neisse. On his arrival in this town, he saw, in descending from his horse, the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and some prelates, canons and other ecclesiastics, who came to pay their court to him. His Majesty, who was not in a very good humour, because he had suffered from the cold on the road, did not receive any of them very well. The ecclesiastics especially were not spared, and the compliment he

This 25th  
April.

made them was less tender of their feelings than that which he had made to the monks of Heinrichau.

“Gentlemen,” said he, in speaking to the priests, “I know with certainty that you have for the most part of you a very strong leaning towards the infamous profession of the spy. Take care. If I perceive or if I am brought to perceive the least disloyalty on your part, I will have you hanged, like the lowest rabble, from one of the towers of the town.”

They made a deep bow and retired, the gentlemen very little pleased with the coolness of their reception, and the priests very indignant at the heat which the King had put into the reproaches which he had made them and which they had never deserved.

In the afternoon, the King, wholly occupied in his mind by the priests of the morning, spoke to me of nothing else during my audience, which was rather long.

“You have no idea, my dear sir, of what this rabble of priests is. They are the greatest rascals that exist. I have shown unheard-of kindness to this priesthood, and it has not ceased to be treacherous. They are always giving news to my enemies, and do me an irreparable wrong. Therefore, if I catch one, prelate, canon, priest, the punishment he will suffer will frighten all the rest of this cowed race.”

‘I am ready to believe that there are among

them some evil persons, as there are in all walks of life, but there are surely many who are incapable of the least treachery.’

“Many, my dear sir? Don’t defend their cause too much. What will you say of that blackguard Schaffgotsch, who betrayed me in the vilest manner? I was always overwhelming him with kindness and favours; he was always at my table. I loaded him with all sorts of attentions and benefits, and this infamous rascal would have delivered me up, if he had been able, me, Breslau, and my army, to the Austrians, who despise him. He learned that I knew all about his treachery and decamped; but infinite justice will pursue him in his asylum, and perhaps he will there meditate treacheries against the Austrians even. Nothing distresses me more than treachery; I have a horror of traitors and the false-hearted. Do you know what I do when I discover them? I read Marcus Antoninus.

“I had during the night at Münsterberg a singular dream,<sup>1</sup> and, I do not know why, I frequently have the same dreams. I dreamt that, in the night, my father entered my room with six soldiers. He ordered them to bind me and to take me to Magdeburg. ‘But why?’ I said to my sister of Baireuth.—‘It is because you do not love your father sufficiently.’ And I awoke all of a sweat, as if I had been dipped in the river. What extravagant ideas, what wild pictures are formed during

<sup>1</sup> This is true.

the sleep of the reason! Not a few such are formed while it is awake, and it is these dreams which men have when they are awake that are ordinarily fatal to them.

“ You must not believe, I beg you, that, like so many imbeciles and old women, I have a silly belief in dreams. They are only the effect of bodily discomfort or of a blood too agitated by the worries of the day.”

And perhaps, I said to myself, hearing this reflection, the dream, quite as much as the cold, was the cause of the tone in which he spoke this morning to the priests of the neighbourhood.

On the occasion of this dream, the King spoke a great deal about his father.

“ What a terrible man,” he said, “ but what a just man, and intelligent and fitted for State affairs! You have no idea of the thorough order he put into all branches of the government. There never was a prince more capable than he of entering into the smallest details, and he entered into them, he used to say, to bring all parts of the State to the greatest degree of perfection. It is therefore through his care, his indefatigable labour, his policy which was always accompanied by the most exact justice, his great and admirable economy, and that severe discipline he put into the army which he created, that it has been possible for me to do what I have done up to the present. In his morals, he was astonishingly austere, but he also, my dear sir, exercised an almost unheard-



of harshness with respect to the morals of others. There was no joking with him: thwacks and kicks were quickly given to those who, in certain moments of bad temper, had the misfortune to come before him.

“ I shall never forget a scene which had as deep an effect on me as had at another time the unfortunate Küstrin affair, of which I will speak to you.

“ I was still a child, learning a little Latin, and was declining *mensa, ae, dominus, i, ardor, is*, with my master, when suddenly my father entered the room. ‘ What are you doing there ? ’ — ‘ Papa, I am declining *mensa, ae*,’ I said in a childish voice which should have touched him. ‘ Ah, rogue, Latin to my son ! Get out of my sight,’ and he gave him a volley of kicks and blows with his stick, accompanying him in this cruel manner into the inner room. Frightened by these blows and by the enraged looks of my father, and shivering with fear, I hid under the table, thinking that I should there be in safety. I saw my father come up to me, after having done execution ; I shuddered still more. He took me by the hair, pulled me from under the table, and dragged me thus into the middle of the room, finishing by smacking my face several times: ‘ If I catch you again at your *mensa*, I will let you know what is what.’

“ He always in succeeding years regarded, with a sourness which I could never understand, my endeavours to cultivate and ornament my mind

and to acquire accomplishments ; and books and flute and writings, when he caught sight of them, were thrown into the fire, and the burning of my books was always followed by blows and sharp reprimands. The only reading he tolerated was that of the New Testament. One would have thought that he wanted to make a theologian of me by the way in which he bade me unceasingly to read the Bible and books relating to it.

“ The severities of my father towards me, my sisters and my brothers, Prince Henry excepted, who was always the object of his affection, his ill-treatment, often carried to the extreme, my tastes altogether thwarted, the most legitimate, the most innocent, the most indifferent even, the continual constraint under which I was kept in all respects, the fears which continually sprang up, all this made me take the step, it is true very thoughtlessly, of leaving the paternal house ; but did I know where the deuce I wanted to go ? This will prove to you, my dear sir, that it was the breaking out of a very soured, very young, and extremely imprudent mind. I borrowed a few hundred ducats, for, thanks to the economy of my father, I often never had a penny in my pocket. I spoke of my intention to Keith and Katte, both of them amiable fellows, but as thoughtless as myself. We fixed a day for our fine prank, and, just as we were on the point of decamping, my father was informed by a letter from outside of the fine intention I had formed. I was arrested,

broken with blows, smacked in the face, so that nothing should be lacking. Without my good and excellent mother who came to my rescue, with my sister of Baireuth, who was also very badly treated, I believe I should have died under the blows I received. I was sent to Küstrin, as you know.

“Keith made off. Katte, whom I was not able to warn of the danger that threatened him, persisted in remaining behind, and he was sent to the fortress. Ah, my dear sir, what a deplorable story, and what barbarity I was made to suffer in that infernal citadel. Nobody spoke to me, dared not speak to me. I was left to myself and to my gloomy ideas about my friend Katte, whose fate troubled me more than my own. I was given my food through a little wicket, and this food, which was always execrable, was exactly what was necessary to prevent me from dying of hunger. Afterwards, I was given one dish for my dinner, and I thought that the end was coming, when one morning an old officer entered my room, with several grenadiers, all weeping. ‘Ah, my Prince, my dear, my poor Prince,’ said the officer, sobbing, ‘my good Prince.’ I certainly thought that my head was to be cut off. ‘Well, then, speak. Am I to die? I am quite ready for these barbarians to execute me, and quickly.’—‘No, my dear Prince, no, you will not die; but permit these grenadiers to lead you to the window and to hold you there.’

“ In fact, they held my head, so that I might see all that happened. Good God, what a terrible spectacle! My dear, my dear, my faithful Katte was to be executed under my window. I tried to hold my hand out to him; it was pushed back. ‘ Ah, Katte,’ I cried, and fainted, and I thwarted the barbarity of those who forced me to see this cruel and barbarous spectacle.

“ My execution was also put to the vote. A few generals devoted to my father and his severities were for condemning me to death. I learned this, and, when I mounted to the throne, I behaved towards these cowardly flatterers as if I were ignorant of their infamies. They were never the objects of my resentment; and say now that I am not a philosopher.

“ If you doubt it, you should know that Grumbkow, speaking of me, said to my father: ‘ Your Majesty must execute this rascal.’

“ It was horrible, but the horror of it did not upset my philosophy. Do you still doubt, sir? This will convince you. I had taken into my regiment a soldier who had deserted from a place of which Sydow was the commandant. Sydow, having been informed that I had this soldier, asked me for him back. I wrote a very polite letter to him, begging him to let me have this man, for whom I would give him two others. Instead of replying to me, he spoke to my father about it, who ordered me to send the soldier back immediately. I sent him to Sydow, beseeching him not to punish



the poor devil; but far from listening to my prayers, he had him flogged thirty times through the line, informing me that he had done so. I came to the throne, and I left Sydow in his government. Well, what do you say to that?"

'That great men alone know how to forget wrongs and to forgive.'

"When I left my dreadful prison at Küstrin, I learned also that my tender and worthy mother had one day told my brothers and sisters to throw themselves at the King's feet, to implore his clemency. The Princess of Baireuth, as the eldest, threw herself at my father's feet as he was crossing his ante-chamber. She was received with blows on the face; the others took fear, and got under the table as I did at the time of the *mensa* adventure. My father, stick in hand, was about to beat these poor little ones, when the Countess Kameke, their governess, arrived, and asked forgiveness for the children. 'Get out of the way, hag,' said the King. She replied; they wrangled; and the irritated countess said to the King: 'The devil will take you if you touch my poor children,' and with a resolute gait she pulled them from underneath the table, and took them into another room, looking at my father in such a way that he was cowed. On the following day, the King saw the countess, and thanked her because she had prevented him from committing a folly. 'I shall always be your friend,' he said, and he kept his word.

“As you may imagine, this scene made an impression on me which will never be effaced. See how it follows me in my dreams, and is continually representing my father as being angry with me and about to beat me.

“On coming to the throne, I was curious to see all that had been done during my detention at Küstrin. I sent for the minutes of the deliberations concerning me and for all the documents in this strange case. I read them carefully, and extracted a few sheets, so that they might not be speaking witnesses for future centuries of the barbarities of an unheard-of conduct towards me. After having torn up these atrocious and sanguinary pages, I had the rest carefully sealed and placed in the archives of the cabinet.

“To continue your brief military course, you should know that I made my plan for the campaign at Breslau. I began it by the taking of Schweidnitz, and I shall march into Moravia with my army, which consists of 65 battalions and of 118 squadrons. I shall besiege Olmütz, and, having taken that town, I will then tell you where I shall lead you.

“General Fouqué is following me with the supply column, the heavy artillery, munitions and everything necessary for a siege; and the corps he commands is intended for that purpose. I have had brought together here several thousand waggons to carry all these things, and in this connection I have used the pretext that the stores at Neisse must be transported to Glatz. This has succeeded, and has

convinced the enemy, whom I sought to deceive by the way, that the campaign will open in Bohemia.

“ You see that in the profession I am exercising, as in all others, cleverness and cunning are needed. Everything has been well prepared and long thought out. To give you an idea of what the Romans called the *impedimenta* of an army, see what we drag about with us. Besides what I have told you of our multitude of waggons, of the siege artillery, and of the field pieces which the regiments have with them, these same regiments have also 66 pieces of 12, 15 of 24, 19 howitzers and 7 mortars. Is not all this apparatus dreadful ? That so much trouble should be needed to bring up a man, and so many things should be set in motion to destroy him, cries for vengeance. Barbarians, make peace ; but the barbarians do not listen to me, alas ! It will not be the spirit of humanity which will force us to make this peace, all of us, whoever we are, Imperials, Russians, French. It will be lack of money. We shall cut each other’s throat until there is no more of this vile metal.”

On the 27th, His Majesty marched from Neisse with the advance-guard of 16 battalions of infantry, 13 squadrons of cavalry and 10 of hussars, and made for Neustaedtel, where he set up his headquarters. The battalions of Wedell, Carlowitz and Kleist covered a thousand waggon-loads of flour and forage which followed the advance-guard, and Marshal Keith ordered 15 battalions of the army into Neisse, which we had just left, to

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take the place of those who had departed. The King spoke thus to me in the afternoon of this march which he had just made.

“When shall I be able to speak to you of our march to Potsdam! God knows, that march still seems to me an exceedingly long way off; but if we ever arrive there, how I shall recompense myself by rest and study for all these worries that weigh on me; what a dog of a life! Do you know the story of the young man who, confessing his sins, his pleasures, his amorous intrigues to his father confessor, heard the latter exclaim at each item: ‘What a dog of a life!’—‘But, father, is it so great a crime to enjoy the pleasures of love, to seduce pretty girls, and to decorate the forehead of those husbands who are unaware of the value of their dear better halves; and must I for pleasures that are so keen and of so short duration suffer endless pains?’—‘Ah, wretch,’ said the father, ‘it is not your life I am speaking of, but it is my life which is a dog of a life.’

“Mine, my dear sir, is certainly one, as you will agree when you have gadded about a little longer with us. Do you think that anybody would wish to be, at the price of the life I lead, this King of Prussia who is so tormented?”

‘I think that a host of people, and especially those who love great adventures, would, in order to be Your Majesty and to taste of glory, suffer still more than Your Majesty suffers.’

“Ah, deuce take it, a fine glory indeed, of burned



villages, towns in ashes, thousands of suffering men, as many massacred, horrors on all sides, and finally finishing oneself off; speak no more of it; my hair stands up on end. At Potsdam, at Potsdam there is the wherewithal to make us happy. When you see this town, I am sure that it will please you. It is a small town of my father's time. If he came back to it, he would certainly not recognise his town again; I have embellished it so much. I chose the plans of the finest buildings in Europe and especially in Italy, and had them carried out on a smaller scale and according to my means. The proportions have been well kept. All the buildings I have had put up are interesting, you will agree. I love to build and to decorate, I confess, but I do it on my savings, and the State does not suffer for it. By building, I give work to men, which is a great point in a State; nothing is more fatal than to permit idleness and to feed useless people. The State suffers more on this account than I can tell you. The money I distribute for my buildings remains in my country, circulates in it, and that is yet another advantage I get from my way of building. You have no idea how much money I have spent to make my Potsdam agreeable. I should be ashamed to tell you how much my Sans-Souci cost me. I should always regret the expenditure on pictures, on statues, on antiques, on colonnades, on gardens, if, as I told you, I had not done it all on my savings. I will give you an idea of my Sans-Souci, and sketch it

for you as it is. You will preserve the drawing I shall make for you, and, if you see it after the war, you will of course tell me if my drawing was accurate.”

In fact, he did draw me a plan of Sans-Souci, of the gallery, the gardens, the Chinese palace, the fine colonnade, the conservatories, marking thereon the position of the statues, and it was not finished until about nine o'clock in the evening.

“That is enough, for to-morrow, early in the morning, we will break up our camp here. Good evening; sleep better than I shall sleep, for I feel over-excited, and I am anxious, without knowing why.”

On the 28th, the King, with the advance-guard, pursued his march by Kunzendorf, Maidelberg, Rosswalde and Roben, to Sauerwitz, where he set up his headquarters. The right of the infantry had before its front the village of Soppau, which Kleist's battalion and Le Noble's free companies occupied; the left touched Sauerwitz, where Lattorff's regiment was billeted. The King commanded the cavalry of the advance-guard to march to Bladen, Wanowitz, Hennerwitz and Krug. This is what the King told me, showing me on the map the camp and the villages which the troops occupied.

“If we had stopped at Rosswalde, which we passed through, you would have seen an altogether singular village. Count Hoditz, who is its lord, has made of this village a charming abode.

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He lives there with some twenty pretty country-women, and as many men, whom he has trained to perform operettas and concerts, and to amuse strangers who come to see this pleasant spot. The count, jealous of these girls, several of whom are very pretty and rather well brought up, and who are at his service in more ways than one, has them watched with astonishing care and anxiety, which amuses everybody who notices it. Woe to the poor girls, who are nearly all dressed as shepherdesses, if they cast on those who come to see the count too curious glances, which always seem to him to say too much; he shuts them up and puts them on bread and water. When he gives balls, which often happens, twenty spies keep watch on the girls, and if any one of these young women squeezes a hand too much or allows her own to be too much squeezed, a voice is heard to cry out *schac*, and, at this word, all the shepherdesses fly from those for whom their heart was perhaps just beginning to palpitate. If any one wishes to get an idea of what the life of the ancient shepherds of Arcadia was, he must go to Rosswalde. The count has endeavoured to realise these fine romances, and he has very nearly succeeded. He avoids as much as possible everything that might suggest too libertine a life, for the Empress, who is holiness itself, would not tolerate that kind of life. She believes that the count amuses himself with shows, and he is allowed to amuse himself thus. The count is a gentlemanly man, and likes good food

excessively and all kinds of pleasure, but his heart is honest, and I am particularly attached to him. We correspond, as far as circumstances permit, and when no annoyance to him will result. If we see Potsdam again, I will beg him to come and see me, and you will be delighted to make his acquaintance. He has wit, much imagination, and is fairly well read."

Count Hoditz was the sole subject of conversation during my audience, which was not long. His Majesty, who was rather tired, went to bed at 8 o'clock, in order to be able to start out at a very early hour in the morning.

This 29th  
April. The King, still with the advance-guard, marched on the 29th by Bladen and Zauditz to Troppau. He stopped on this and the following day in this little town, and billeted there all his infantry. The Prince of Würtemberg set out first with 20 squadrons, and advanced towards Grätz, whence a battalion of Croats, who had passed the night there, had retired. This battalion left behind a quantity of flour. The cavalry passed through Troppau and took up its quarters between the Oppava and the Mora, beside the main road to Olmütz. Marshal Keith advanced with the army in two columns towards Jägerndorf.

That is the idea which the King gave me in the afternoon of the march of the morning. He also spoke of the troops which he was directing on Glatz, but I did not remember what he told me.



“These poor Troppau people are anxious about my arrival,” he said to me in the evening. “I found, in descending from my horse, the guild of shopkeepers all in tears, and beseeching me to prevent them from being pillaged. They touched me, I assure you. ‘Am I a Trenck that I should pillage you,’ I said to them. ‘Be reassured; you will suffer no loss, and if, against my expectation, any wrong is done you, you know where I lodge, and I will have justice done to you. But beware of playing the spy. If that happens, you will be treated severely.’

“A man must be very barbarous, my dear sir, to trouble without reason poor devils who, after all, have nothing to do with our illustrious quarrels.”

I admired this way of thinking and this compassion for the unfortunate, which it is touching to find in a prince who can so easily do evil. The King perceived that I was affected by what he had just said to me. He mentioned it, and praised my sensibility in a way that made me quite confused.

“Preserve carefully that sensibility. It is one of the finest gifts of nature. If it exposes us often to many annoyances, how many pleasures is it not the source of, if it is also accompanied by prudence.”

He was moralising thus, when, going up to the window, he saw on two of its panes, some French verses written fairly distinctly.

“Come here, come here, here are some verses  
Who would have thought of finding them here :

Parmi les intérêts qui divisent la terre,  
Nous serons exposés aux horreurs de la guerre.<sup>1</sup>

“This explains to me the terror of these good  
people, who thought that I wanted to sack the  
town. Let us see the others :

Mais de son ire éteindre le salpêtre,  
Savoir se vaincre et réprimer les flots  
De son orgueil, c'est ce que j'appelle être  
Grand par soi-même, et voilà mon héros.”<sup>2</sup>

The King read these last verses two or three  
times.

“Who the devil wrote that, and whom is it  
aimed at ? ”

I replied that it was the end of an epigram  
against Prince Eugene, which the famous Rousseau  
had written in a moment of vexation with the  
Prince.

“Say ‘ingratitude’ rather. Suppose, as they  
say, that he had displeased the Prince because he  
took up too warmly before him the defence of  
Count de Bonneval, his friend, and that the Prince  
gave vent to his displeasure, is that a reason for  
blackening with an epigram a great man who had  
overwhelmed him with benefits ? Rousseau had  
so strongly contracted the habit of making epigrams

<sup>1</sup> [‘Amid the interests which divide the earth, we shall be exposed  
to the horrors of war.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘But to extinguish the gunpowder of your anger, to know how to  
conquer yourself and repress the flood of your pride, that is what I call  
being great in yourself, and such a man is my hero.’]

that his misfortunes could not correct him of it, and that he published them broadcast unceasingly against his old and his new friends, and even against his most zealous protectors, as you see here. Could you remember the beginning of the epigram? It has escaped my memory.”

‘ Yes, it runs thus, I think :

Est-on héros pour avoir mis aux chaînes  
Un peuple ou deux : Tibère eut cet honneur ;  
Est-on héros, en régnant par la peur :  
Séjan fit tout trembler jusqu’à son maître.  
Mais de son ire . . .’<sup>1</sup>

“ You must agree that this stroke of the poet is infamous : to attack thus a great man ! Of what value are talents if they are not embellished by integrity of heart ? For my part, I account them nothing at all.”

On this occasion he spoke of Prince Eugene.

“ I saw him in the campaign of the Rhine. Although weakened by age and fatigues, he still had luminous moments, especially before meals. After dinner his digestion was painful, and he was almost outside the conversation. He had permitted me to see him every day a few moments before sitting down to table. It was then that he deigned to instruct me and to give me those great rules and maxims which I have never forgotten. ‘ Be always on the great side when you are drawing up plans of campaign. Make them as vast as

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Is a man a hero for having put in chains a people or two? Tiberius had that honour. Is a man a hero for reigning by terror? Sejanus made all tremble, even his master. But . . .’]

possible, for you will always fall short of what you intended. Meditate unceasingly on your profession, your operations and those of generals who have made themselves famous. This meditation is the only means of acquiring that promptness of the mind to grasp everything, to imagine everything that fits the circumstances in which you may happen to find yourself.' Touched by the kindness which the Prince showed to me, and delighted by the lessons he was giving me, I tried, in conveying to him my gratitude, to indicate my admiration for his sublime talents and for the immortal glory he had won. The Prince suddenly changed the subject of conversation, and, on rising from the table, one of his officers warned me that nothing distressed the Prince more than the praises which people loved to give him, that he was as modest as he was a great captain; that, if I wanted to hear the Prince further on subjects which might interest and enlighten me, I must be careful to say nothing which might have the air of flattery. I took this to heart: no further praise escaped me, and I continued to be instructed as I desired. If I am worth anything at all and understand a little of my profession, especially in its more difficult parts, I owe these advantages to Prince Eugene. Thus, I always strive after great things; I employ all my forces, and I leave the minor objects, if no very marked results can come of them. Would you like an epitome of what Prince Eugene was? In war and politics, he had astonishing and sublime views



on all operations, combined with superior abilities both in the forcing of advantages and profiting by them, and in retrieving his mistakes, for even the greatest men make them. Steadfast, wise and virtuous, fearing neither the enemies of the State nor his own, he beat the former and forced the latter to respect and fear him. That was Prince Eugene."

The King usually turned to account what he had (30th April.) seen or heard and made it the subject of his occupations, his recreations and his talk. The verses of the day before awakened in him ideas of poetry and declamation.

Seeing me enter, he came up to me. "Everything in nature declaims, sir, and why should I not declaim? I have touched up my ode to the French to make it worthy of being sent to the Patriarch, when he does me the honour to write to me. I will recite it to you."

He knew it by heart, and he declaimed it as though it were a tragedy.

"You must not believe that the correction of my ode has alone occupied my morning; I did something much more useful. I meditated an address to the Sultan to invite him to make war on my enemies. 'Awaken, Sublime Highness, awaken, the great Eugene who gave you such disastrous blows is no more. Pitiless death has taken him from the world that admired him. Avenge yourself of the evils he did you; the moment is favourable; you have but to appear,

and you will be sure of victory. Generous as you are, you will not see with indifference a poor prince attacked by all the powers of Europe. The Austrians have spread the story that I love war : Sublime Highness, do not believe it, it is false ; I have been forced to war and to burn ; I am defending myself as I can ; I shall succumb if you do not come soon to my help.' But His Highness gave a deaf ear. Like the corrupt world, he flies from the unfortunate. Let us fight on alone then and die, if need be, for our dear country and for glory.

“ Those are fine things, you must confess. It is thus that I lull my cares and my troubles.”

Going up to the window, I saw that a part of the verses on Prince Eugene had been scratched out, so that, if I had not seen them the day before, I should not have been able to decipher them. The others remained whole. I discovered, as a result of my investigations about these verses, that a Frenchman who had lodged there had written them with a diamond. As the King was somewhat occupied in his mind as to who had written these verses, I told him what I had learned, and that even in the palace of Prince Liechtenstein these same verses were written on the window-panes, from what an officer had told me who lodged there.

1st, 2nd, and  
3rd May.

On the 1st of May, His Majesty started forward with the advance-guard and arrived at Alt-Zeschdorf, on the 2nd at Gibau, on the 3rd at Starnau, a village devastated by petechiae, a pestilential malady which the Croats had brought

there, and which had destroyed nearly all the peasants. During these three days of painful marching, I had only very short audiences with His Majesty, who seemed each time very fatigued. In the last-named place, he touched up some of his poetic pieces and read them to me.

“While crossing Gibau yesterday, I heard distinct halleluiahs. It reminded me of a story which I will tell you; perhaps you do not know it. The old Duke of Würtemberg was ill in Italy with a fever. One day, he began to cry out, Halleluiah, halleluiah! The doctor, becoming anxious, thought that the fever was getting worse, and wished to feel his pulse. ‘What are you doing, sir, I am all right. I was just trying to see whether I could find any pleasure in chanting my death, but devil take me if I could.’ The doctor crossed himself many times, and retired. This language of the prince was somewhat strong; but that is how men are: they jest about certain points of their beliefs, and get alarmed about others. Why? It is because they are not steadfast in their beliefs, or because they only half believe. As for me, I am firm in the plan I have made for myself and in my own beliefs. As I have told you, the more you know me, the more will you see me always the same. I have studied all the systems of religion and of philosophy. I have taken from them what seemed to me least unreasonable, and I have clearly seen that, to be happy, we must have morals, we must ascertain exactly our station and

fill it worthily ; we must live moderately, and not think too much of life. When the Duke de Nivernois was in Berlin, I expounded to him the ideas I have just placed before you : ‘ But, Sire, they relate that Your Majesty does not believe in the immortality of the soul ? ’—‘ That is true. ’—‘ And that it is material ? ’—‘ Also true. ’—‘ But you think . . . ’—‘ Yes, but perhaps not so well as you. ’ The duke swallowed this with delight. Good evening ! Until to-morrow.”

On the 4th, we marched to Littau, where headquarters were set up. I was called immediately after dinner. The King had had hung up a large map of Moravia, and showed me the position of Littau, that of the places which he proposed to make his headquarters, and the town of Olmütz.

“ This is the beginning of an altogether new scene for you and of my campaign operations. God knows whether good or evil is reserved for me ; what I know is that I will do everything that I can to have the advantage, and that I shall not spare myself ; you will probably have too many opportunities to be aware of this. I will give you a brief idea of what we did this morning. See first of all the position of Littau. It is surrounded by the Morava, which towards Mährisch-Neustadt forms several branches, the banks of which are very marshy. The town has a rampart and fairly good walls. If it had been defended by infantry, I should not have been able to take it so easily, but the enemy had only posted in the suburbs some

This 4th  
May.



hussars, who retired as soon as they heard a few cannon go off. My hussars pursued them on the Olmütz road, and took 31 of them. That was not a very great capture. To-morrow, perhaps, we shall have more of them."

'I saw these prisoners, Sire, and one of our hussars was dressing the wound of an Austrian whose arm was hanging almost by a thread. I was very much touched by this.'

"You will often see similar attentions, and even our hussars sharing with those whom they have taken their provisions and what they had at first plundered them of: thus humanity in certain cases, barbarity in others. That is how the world is made, and, willy-nilly, we must take it as it is. You admired the humanity of my hussars. What will you say to this: I like to believe that it is a story. On a day of battle, a soldier who was almost dying was interred like the others. Fortunately, he was placed on top of his companions. Coming to himself after the lapse of some time, he got up, and went to report himself to his captain, who had already struck him off the roll. The captain, seeing him coming, cried out: 'Rogue, be off with you; you are struck off the roll.' You will agree that the captain was far less deserving than the hussar who this morning was dressing the wound of the prisoner he had made.

"Compassion, humanity, virtue, these are what distinguish one man from another and set up an immense distance between them. Unfortunately,

these virtues are counted for nothing, and, more unfortunately still, the criminal who is lucky in his enterprises is often more thought of than the honest man who suffers reverses. The corruption in morals is unprecedented and general. I see it everywhere, in all ranks, in all stations, especially at court—nothing assuredly is done there by virtue.

“Yet what we have the greatest need of in the relationships of life is sincerity; but, my dear sir, what rare plants honest people are! One of the things I tolerate least in society is ingratitude, which is truly odious to me. When I see that I have been hurt by carelessness or by accident, I take no notice of it; but when I see that there is intention behind an attempt to stab me to the heart and that it is laughed at, I shudder, and, I confess, I must avenge myself. I am not of those who turn the other cheek when their face has been struck.”

After this fine moralising, word was brought to the King that four Saxon regiments, cavalry, with several hundred hussars were encamped at Olschan, and that they were covering stores there.

“Good,” he said, “that is a little job for us to do to-morrow. I am going to bed, in order to be astride at three o’clock in the morning. On my return, I will relate to you the fine prank I am meditating. Good evening.”

“You see me again, sir, covered with glory. This morning, at daybreak, I rode with Normann, Czettritz, Krockow, and Platen’s dragoons and all the hussars, followed by two regiments of infantry

and four battalions, to dislodge M. de Ville, who, I was told, was at Olschan. When I arrived there, I found nobody at home. The general who commands a corps there fell back in the night on Prossnitz, leaving at Olschan only 300 hussars, of whom we took 40, and a great deal of hay, but very little grain and flour. You will agree that I did great marvels. Returning from my brilliant incursion, I went with Zieten's hussars in the direction of Olmütz; I reconnoitred the fortress of Tafelberg; I saw an inundation they had made, and I learned that the garrison consisted of 10 incomplete battalions, that there were in the town 1500 Bavarians, 300 Croats, 200 dragoons of different regiments, as many hussars, that generals Marschall and Bretton were in command there, and that the place was abundantly supplied with food and munitions. That has been my life to-day, and you, probably without leaving your room, know as much of it as I do. I am as tired as any rogue, and I suffer very much with hemorrhoids. I was tormented with them all night, and have none the less run about. We must overdo ourselves. In my position, I should be doing wrong to spare myself. My machine must work, cost what may. I drive it like an old hack with much spurring; however, if I did not owe it to my station in life, my decision would soon be taken. Now, to rest ourselves, let us read the tragedy of *Britannicus*, but remember that I must have, after each act I read, a pinch of snuff. You see I am not too exacting."

In the first scene of the first act where Agrippina says :

Britannicus le gêne, Albine, et chaque jour  
Je sens que je deviens importune à mon tour,<sup>1</sup>

“ See how much art there is in this Racine, and how in a few words he at once announces the subject of the play, the disgrace of Britannicus and that of Agrippina ; and what a delightful turn in these words of Agrippina, speaking of Nero :

Il commence, il est vrai, par où finit Auguste.<sup>2</sup>

“ These are the happy turns of phrase which distinguish Racine, and bring one back to him unceasingly with ever new pleasure. And how he embellishes words :

Que vous m’osiez compter pour votre créature.<sup>3</sup>

Never has the word ‘*créature*’ been used in this sense with so much nobility.

“ What a fine entry Racine gives to Nero in this opening speech :

N’en doutez point, Burrhus, malgré ses injustices,  
C’est ma mère, et je veux ignorer ses caprices.”<sup>4</sup>

In scene 2, where Nero says to Narcissus about his mother :

Mon génie étonné tremble devant le sien,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Britannicus is in his way, Albinus, and every day I feel that in my turn I am becoming irksome to him.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘ He is beginning, it is true, where Augustus left off.’]

<sup>3</sup> Agrippina to Burrhus, scene ii. [‘ That you dared to count me as your creature.’]

<sup>4</sup> Act ii. scene 1, Nero to Burrhus. [‘ You must not forget, Burrhus, in spite of her unjust words, she is my mother, and it is my wish to overlook her whims.’]

<sup>5</sup> [‘ My astonished genius trembles before hers.’]



the King pointed out to me that this line, according to what Voltaire had told him one day, or rather this fine image, had been borrowed from Plutarch, who relates that a soothsayer, seeing Antony constantly lose at play with Octavius, addressed these words to him: 'Antony, keep away from this young man; your genius fears his.'

He made many observations, but I was not able to remember them all. When he arrived at that fine scene in the third act, where Burrhus says to Nero:

Et ne suffit-il pas, Seigneur, à vos souhaits  
Que le bonheur public soit un de vos bienfaits? . . .  
Quel plaisir de penser et de dire en vous-même:  
Partout, en ce moment, on me bénit, on m'aime . . .<sup>1</sup>

he could not finish, so great was the flow of his tears, and, perceiving that I was moved both by the tears he was shedding and by this very touching speech of Burrhus: "Ah, my dear sir, no, there is nothing more pathetic, more affecting and more sublime than these words of Burrhus. I never read them without the keenest emotion. What skill to excite this monster to goodness. It is the *timat timentum* of Seneca."<sup>2</sup>

After having recovered somewhat from his

<sup>1</sup> ['And does it not satisfy your desires, my lord, that the public happiness should be one of your good deeds? What a pleasure to think and say to yourself: I am at this moment everywhere blessed and loved.' This scene is in the fourth act.]

<sup>2</sup> *Timet timentes*. It is a great thing, says Seneca in his *Octavia*, to attain the celebrity of illustrious men, to watch over your country's fortune, to succour the unfortunate, to refrain from murder, to put a curb on your anger, to give peace to the universe.

emotion, he continued, but, having finished this line and half of the following one :

Je vois voler partout les cœurs à mon passage !  
Tels étaient vos plaisirs,<sup>1</sup>

he stopped. "I cannot go on," he said, "this Racine tears my heart."

In fact, he was not able to finish the scene ; he shut the book, and, walking up and down, still wept.

"Happy," he said, "are those princes who have men like Burrhus to counsel and reprove them ; but, alas ! they have unfortunately only flatterers who destroy them.

Je ne t'écoute plus, va-t-en, monstre exécérable  
Va, laisse-moi le soin de mon sort déplorable,  
Puisse le juste ciel dignement te payer,  
Et puisse ton supplice à jamais effrayer  
Tous ceux qui, comme toi, par de lâches adresses  
Des princes malheureux nourrissent les faiblesses,  
Les poussent au penchant où leur cœur est enclin,  
Et leur osent du crime aplanir le chemin,  
Détestables flatteurs, présent le plus funeste  
Que puisse faire aux rois la colère céleste.<sup>2</sup>

"But what am I at, my dear sir ! This is not the time to declaim and to be moved to pity. We must try to sleep and to be astride at dawn to-morrow."

<sup>1</sup> ['Everywhere I see hearts flying out to me as I pass. Such were your pleasures.']

<sup>2</sup> *Phèdre*, act iv. scene 5, Phèdre to Œnone : ['I will listen to you no longer ; be off, execrable monster. Go, leave me the care of my miserable fate. May a just heaven repay you worthily, and may your punishment for ever terrify all those who, like you, by base cunning, feed the weaknesses of unfortunate princes, push them in the direction to which their heart inclines, and dare to smooth for them the road to crime. Detestable flatterers, the most fatal present that heavenly anger can make to kings.']

This scene which I had just witnessed made a still deeper impression on me when I went over it again in my mind on my return to my lodgings. How happy a people is when he who governs it finds a true pleasure in the thought that his people bless and love him, when he sees for himself all hearts flying out to him as he passes by, and when he sighs and suffers because duty forces him to punish, and how happy this King must himself be with such sentiments : his habits of thought must raise him above the blows of fortune. The language of the King, which I believed to be truth itself, attached me to him in so true and affectionate a manner, that certain discrepancies have not been able to weaken the keen regard which I conceived.

On advice received that the enemy had considerable posts at Lostitz, Mirau and Müglitz, it was supposed that these might be the advance-guard of Marshal Daun, and the King, acting on this supposition, disposed 23 battalions and 12 squadrons in such a way that the right rested on the suburbs of Littau and the left on the Rumpach. On this mountain were placed 20 battery pieces. Heyden and Rath's battalions encamped on the left wing. He set up a battery of 10 pieces of 24 on their right, and had constructed a large abattis on the river bank to the left of the army. The front of the camp was covered by the villages of Aschmeritz, Haniowitz and Mühldörfel, which were separated by ditches and ponds. The King also placed 10 pieces of 12 on one of the bastions of Littau. 6th May.

These pieces swept the plain before the front, and made a crossing fire with the great Rumpach battery.

“That has been my work to-day.”

He showed me on his map the position I have just spoken of, and the arrangements he had made.

“You can already gather some idea of what it costs in care and trouble to make war, but all this is but a very slight beginning of our troubles.

Heureux qui satisfait de son humble fortune,  
Libre du joug superbe où je suis attaché,  
Vit dans l'état obscur où les dieux l'ont caché.<sup>1</sup>

“I should have desired to lead a quiet life. Believe me, that is my taste and inclination; but the gods have disposed otherwise of me, and in spite of my loving repose above all else, they have forced me to run after great adventures, and yet I am thought to be happy: to be as happy as a king, say the stupid people.

“See for yourself whether I am this happy mortal: six years before the war even I was anxious, I foresaw the storm, and, since then, what troubles, what unprecedented fatigues, and what reverses! I have need of all my philosophy to bear this burden that weighs on me so. As a private individual—which I have often desired to be—I should live in quiet and as I pleased. I should be sure of having a few friends; I should

<sup>1</sup> *Iphigénie*, act i. scene 1. [‘Happy is he who, satisfied with his humble fortune, free of the proud yoke to which I am tied, lives in the obscure station in which the gods have hidden him.’]



cultivate them carefully ; I should live ; there is no life without sweet friendship. Be assured that I know the full worth of this sentiment. I have often lost good friends, and, when this misfortune has happened to me, I have shut myself up in my room, and, there, alone, I have wept like a child.

Amitié plaisir de grandes âmes,  
Amitié que les rois, ces illustres ingrats,  
Sont assez malheureux de ne connaître pas.<sup>1</sup>

“ The more you see of me the more will you agree that I am an exception to this unfortunately too just sentence. It is seldom and very seldom that kings know this sentiment. Generally, my dear sir, princes are riff-raff ; a man is spoiled being with them ; don't you think so ? ”

‘ I have not the honour of knowing any princes, and even if I did, it is not my place to judge them. Those who resemble the portrait which Your Majesty has given me of his manner of thinking will have my admiration and my homage.’

“ You will not, I predict, have many opportunities in the course of your life to make a great expenditure in homage and admiration. Things are as I tell you.”

On the 7th, we marched to Aschmeritz, where This 7th  
May at  
Aschmeritz. were set up headquarters during the four days in which the King stayed in this place. He rode out several times to reconnoitre the enemy and the different posts occupied by him. Although fatigued

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Friendship, pleasure of great souls, friendship, which kings, those illustrious ingrates, are so unfortunate as not to know.’]

and suffering much from hemorrhoids, he was gay enough. His conversation did not have a shade of sadness, like the foregoing. He made merry over the ladies.

“One who was very beautiful made a great outcry because another had taken a place in front of her at church. ‘But, madam,’ they said to her, ‘God sees you as well in your place as in any other.’—‘No, no,’ she replied, ‘that is not so. He has certainly tried to play me a trick.’

“A Grand Duchess, being *in periculo mortis*, sent for a confessor, who spoke to her of her dangerous position. He exhorted her to seize the moments that remained to her to make her peace with heaven. The Duchess, still occupied with this world, spoke of nothing but frivolities. ‘But, madam, how can you use such language in your present position, with one foot already in the other world?’—‘Oh, fie, fie, reverend father, what an attitude to place me in, astraddle! Fie, holy father, you are not aware of what you are saying.’

“That is what most women are like, continually occupied by vanity, which follows them to the tomb of all vanities. Either vain, or coquettes: everywhere you will see them the same. I have often said to women whose coquetry went beyond all bounds: ‘Ladies, you are doing what is done everywhere; but you should have a little more decency and respect for yourselves. I pass over

your amorous intrigues when they are dictated by passion, but when they are dictated by interest, I cannot pardon them.'

"One day, dining with my mother, I let myself go rather on the subject of the ladies of our town. I spoke at some length of their coquetry, their secret pleasure parties, some of which went beyond raillery even. 'But,' said a lady to me, 'how can you thus judge us? You do not know us, you do not live with us.'—'Oh, madam, God forbid that I should judge you by myself. I am not unjust. What I have just said about your intrigues which are not edifying I have from my good friend Jordan.' At this word, all the fair ladies rose up against poor Jordan, who was of our dinner. They called him everything they could think of. 'Ladies,' he said with great coolness, 'the King has related to you some very pretty things; but there is one fault in his story, and that is that I have never used such language to him. You may be sure, ladies, that what I am telling you is the truth. The King is full of maliciousness.' We finished our dinner laughing at what had been said and at the phlegm of the good Jordan.

"In spite of what I have just told you of the fair ladies, there are women who are infinitely respectable, and who deserve for their wit, their graces and that respect which they have for themselves, the homage of sensible men."

On this occasion, he drew me a very fine portrait of the Queen-Empress, of her abilities, her courage,

her beneficence, her generosity and her spotless virtue.

“She is my enemy, it is true. She does me a great deal of harm ; but I must do her the justice she deserves. Princesses like her are seldom seen.

“Although I have told you that I have always loved seclusion and a quiet life, you must not conclude that I am an Ostrogoth. I know how to mix with the world and to amuse it, if necessary. I can receive a large company as well as any other. When I am at Berlin, I quite frequently give a grand banquet, and I give them well, sir. I speak to each according to his taste, and I do so well that those whom I have invited are pleased with themselves and with me. At present, I feel that on my return, if it ever takes place, I shall be no longer fit for the great and fine world of the capital. I shall shut myself up in my fine castle of *Potzedam*, as the Marquis calls it, and there I shall live with my friends in the bosom of philosophy and literature. But is this good fortune reserved for me, and when will it be ? If you were Maupertuis, I would beg you to lift up your soul and to pierce the dark obscurities of the future. If you were that just man of the Gospel, I would ask you to pray for me, since the prayer of the just is so very efficacious. I would beseech you to transport me to Potsdam with all my army, or suddenly to transport that of my enemies to the frontiers of Turkey. What a fine spectacle, my dear sir, to see these armies marching in aerial space, and what a gentle pleasure



to live in peace. But there is no more Maupertuis ; that fatal *Akakia* has buried him alive. There is no longer any pre-eminently just man ; human weakness does not admit of so much virtue. Alas, my dear sir, I see we must still fight on—and why ? To make a name for oneself ; it is true that there is nothing so difficult as to make a name for oneself, because we nearly always see people doing things for which they are not fitted ; but even if we make this name for ourselves, this cherished object of ambitious mortals, will this name compensate for all the troubles and annoyances it was necessary to undergo in order to obtain it ? In faith, we are great madmen, it must be agreed.”

Following this conversation, the King spoke of the operas of Berlin, of their virtues, and of the excellent singers he had.

“ If I see Berlin again, I will have an opera produced which is all beauty.”

He wished to tell me its name, but he could not remember it. He sought and sought again, and then became impatient.

“ This is diabolical,” he said, “ I can’t find that name. Good evening. Perhaps it will come to me when I am alone. If I do not find it, it will be impossible for me to go to sleep.”

In the night, at one o’clock, there was a knock at my door. ‘ Who is there ? ’

‘ It is the servant. I come from the King. Your master must be awakened. I have brought him a paper to which he must reply.’

A candle was lit, and I read these words :

“ I have found the name : it is *Montezuma*. I shall now be able to sleep quietly. Do the same. With the idea that you might be restless about this name and not able to sleep, I wished to spare you a bad night.”

It was not so bad, for I was sleeping quietly, and, awakened, it was not possible for me to go to sleep again. I thanked the King, however, on the following day for his kind intention. He told me on this day a very extraordinary thing. Speaking of the wickedness of men, he said that one of his aides-de-camp, who had been in charge of the money chest, had embezzled 12,000 crowns. The King perceived the deficit, pointed it out to the aide-de-camp, and said to him : “ I know that you could give me back what you have taken ; keep it. But, as you would not be comfortable here in your career, I advise you to withdraw. I will hide your infamy from everybody, both for your parents' sake, who are perhaps to be blamed for having spoiled you, and for your own, although you only deserve my indignation.”

“ You see, my dear sir, that I am after all a good man and an honest Christian.”

I have never been able to learn anything, however, concerning this fraud.

I recalled to him, on this occasion, one of his conversations, in which he had held that men were compelled to do what they do.

‘ If that is so, Sire, this aide-de-camp was very

unfortunate. He was not free not to take the money in your chest, and it cannot be said with any foundation that he was guilty. He was no more guilty than another who would have left intact the money in your strong-box.'

"But he knew that this was something that I had confided to his care. He must have felt that he was betraying the confidence I had placed in him, that he was dishonouring himself."

'Compelled, as Your Majesty argues, he could neither see nor feel what Your Majesty does me the honour to tell me.'

"It is true, there are great difficulties there. Do you know, the best thing is to suspend our judgment. There are great difficulties on both sides."

This subject of necessity and free will was his favourite. He often returned to it, and, as it appeared to me that his ideas were neither sufficiently sound nor sufficiently settled, and that he often changed the state of the question, he often altered his opinion on this subject, which he called the pre-eminent object of divine metaphysics.

The King marched, on the 11th, in three columns 11th May. Schmirnitz. to Schmirnitz with 15 battalions, 38 squadrons, and 90 pieces of heavy cannon; he set up his headquarters there. Having sent for me at three o'clock in the afternoon, he said:

"We are fixed here for some time. I came here on the information given me by one of my majors of hussars that the whole of the enemy army had left Bohemia. Some deserters affirmed that it was

making towards Brünn. As you cannot yet have any clear idea of what we are doing, and you must have a clear idea for your military course, come here and follow me on my map.

“I thought it necessary to take up a position opposite Prossnitz here to cover the siege on this side. The right of my army rests on this big mountain. The village of Starechowitz is before it. This mountain is all covered with woods, and I have had abattis made up to the summit. The battalions of the right wing defend them with their camp guards. Twenty pieces of heavy cannon are placed in battery before the right wing on a height which commands the whole of the plain.

“The left wing of my infantry touches Studenitz, and has before it the village of Szelechowitz. The first line skirts the heights; it is covered by these ponds and these marshes which you see between Kosteletz and Prossnitz. My cavalry forms the second line. The different positions in which I have placed my troops are not so bad. I can very easily defend the approach to Olmütz on this side of the Morava, and Daun can no longer prevent Fouqué from coming up with the heavy artillery and the munitions. Do you know why?”

‘No, Sire.’

“It is because the corps which is encamped at Neustadt prevents the enemy from sending detachments into the mountains which separate Upper Silesia from Moravia, and the camp at Aschmeritz, commanded by Marshal Keith, and



mine at Schmirnitz, are both so strong that we cannot be attacked there with impunity. The enemy army still lacks many things. With the exception of the storehouse of Olmütz, there is no flour in this province, for none of the generals suspected that the theatre of war would be there. My bakery will be established to-morrow at Drzowitz for my army, and at Littau for Keith's corps. That is all, sir. Have you clearly understood what I have just told you? Did you follow me on the map?"

"I believe so, Sire."

"Well then, repeat your lesson, for it is by repetition that we acquire clear ideas, that we understand things properly and imprint them strongly on our minds."

I repeated therefore; with the exception of a few points on which he corrected me, he remarked that for a novice I had a pretty clear idea of all that he had explained to me.

"At present you can remain here quietly, for you will see that we shall take Olmütz without striking a blow, take my word for it. When you go out riding, you will do well to see the camp and the different positions of which I have spoken to you, and if you meet any officers of your acquaintance, beg of them to show you on the ground what I have pointed out to you on the map. Without this ocular evidence, look out for your military notions; they run the risk of being mixed up. But you must be tired. I am so extremely, and I

will go to bed, so as to be on foot to-morrow at about three in the morning, for in this confounded life I lead, I must not remain in bed like the Vendômes.”<sup>1</sup>

This 12th  
May.

Called at four o'clock, I found the King occupied in reading Gresset's *la Chartreuse*.

“What a charming poet this Gresset is, how elegant,” he said. “It is a great pity that he puts forward too often the same ideas, which he turns over and over. You might say that he cannot leave them; but these are slight faults compared with the beauties with which his poems are filled.”

He recited these lines :

Pour moi qui d'un poids équitable  
Ai pesé les faibles mortels  
Et les biens et les maux réels,<sup>2</sup>

and these :

Des mortels j'ai vu les chimères.<sup>3</sup>

“Nothing can be more spirited and more true. Reading this *Chartreuse*, I experience a gentle feeling; I appreciate better the scenes of life, and it seems to me, while I am reading, that I am better pleased with others and with myself. I will read you his epistle to his sister. It is excellently well written, and there are very striking lines in it :

<sup>1</sup> [Louis Joseph, Duke of Vendôme, 1654-1712. Voltaire said of him, ‘The table and sleep took up too much of his time.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘For myself who with just scales have weighed weak mortals and real blessings and evils.’]

<sup>3</sup> [‘I have seen the idle fancies of mortals.’]

La douleur est un siècle et la mort un moment . . .  
 Du soir d'un jour obscur les nuages épais. . . .<sup>1</sup>

“ I am convinced that this last line, although it seems very smooth and easy, yet cost the poet a good deal. Have you often read this charming Gresset ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire, very often. He is one of my favourite poets. When I am down-hearted, I read his *Chartreuse*, and my melancholy disappears.’

“ You are sometimes down-hearted ? You don't know what you say. It is I alone who am down-hearted, and who have the right to be so. As you read the works of Gresset for preference, permit me to give you a rule which I always use when I am reading poetry : in order not to be seduced by the harmony and the beauty of the lines to the point of overlooking what might at bottom be highly ornamented nonsense, I put into prose the pompous lines I come across, and often I perceive by doing this that I had at first admired very improperly. Whenever, later on, I read you either tragedies, odes or epistles, I will show you how I employ this rule I speak of. I will rewrite lines ; it is thus that taste is formed, and that you disentangle the natural and the beautiful from that which is neither. Have you ever tried to write verses ? ”

‘ Sometimes, Sire.’

“ Have you preserved the rough draft or a copy of your essays ? ”

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Pain is an age, and death a moment. . . . The thick clouds of the evening of a dark day.’]

‘I believe that I have a copy of a short piece to a friend who had won a prize at the Académie des Inscriptions.’

“Oh, bring it to me to-morrow. I will tell you what I think about it.”

‘Your Majesty will find it very dull.’

“That does not matter; bring it all the same. You cannot be a master at your first trial; but you can become so by dint of trying your powers and correcting yourself.”

I showed him my lines on the morrow. He pulled them to pieces, telling me all the while that they were tolerable enough. However, he left intact these concluding lines :

Si je puis mériter un sort si glorieux,  
Je te laisse la gloire, elle ne m'est plus chère,  
Ton amitié remplit mes vœux.<sup>1</sup>

“I say nothing about your last lines; they are rather good. Take my advice: continue to practise. Choose an interesting subject, and, when you have finished anything, show it to me; but you must expect very severe criticism. I shall correct you with the utmost rigour, and will make you begin again, until the thing is well written. It was thus, as I have told you, that Voltaire acted towards me; I will be your Voltaire.”

‘I should be very happy if this Voltaire found in me what the author of the *Henriade* found in him whose lines he corrected.’

<sup>1</sup> [‘If I can deserve so glorious a fate, I leave glory to you; it is no longer dear to me. Your friendship fills all my hopes.’]



“ But tell me frankly, do you not find in my lines which I have read to you something of the fluency of Racine ? ”

And without waiting for my reply, “ I will read you,” he said, “ a little of my poem on war. Nothing is so difficult in poetry as to make interesting the precepts of an art, whatever it is. Voltaire assured me that I had succeeded, that the rules which I give in my poem on the murdering art, on the infernal art, as he used to call it, of killing men, were embellished by smooth and happy lines. He was not flattering me in speaking in this way, for he told me without any ado that the lines in my other poetical pieces lacked a certain care and finish, and that they did not always reach the French brilliancy of style ; that, however, in my descriptions and in unusual expressions, I filled my lines with ideas, broad views and very poetical passages. He did not flatter me, as you see, so that I could rely on the praise which he gave to what was good. But do you know, sir, that I should be very pleased with my day, if it had been confined to chattering about my verses ? I have done something worth a good many verses, and, if I have not been able to do more, fate, sir, fate did not permit of it.

“ As General de Ville was encamped behind the pass of Predlitz with a dozen regiments of cavalry and some uhlans, I wanted to prevent this general from troubling the right flank of General Seydlitz, whom I had sent to Tobitschau and Kremsier.

To do this, I set out very early in the morning with some hussars, some dragoons, the bodyguards, the *gens d'armes*, the carbineers, and some infantry. I marched towards this gentleman in two columns, the left column was to take him in the flank, and the other, which went along the road known as the *Kaiserweg*, was to attack him in front. The enemy posts which we found at Uhrschitz fell back on the detachments posted before Prödlitz, and the latter on the army of their general. De Ville retired by Wischau to Raussnitz, in better order than I desired. However, he lost 16 men killed on the spot. We took 3 of his officers and 41 men. We found at Wischau 80 casks of flour and over 1600 bushels of oats, which my hussars are having carried into our camp. See the places on my map. All this was not a great affair, but it is yet worth more than a few verses. But what do I hear? What a horrible hubbub! Let us see what it is about."

A peasant was following a *vivandière*, who had stolen a horse from him. He lamented and cried out in a loud voice because all that remained to him had been taken away from him. He addressed the King, whom he did not know, and, trying to take him by the arm, he said: 'Oh, sir, make them give me back my horse.'

The King apostrophised the thief in very energetic terms, made her get down from the horse, and, calling up a non-commissioned officer, had him administer to her twenty strokes with a cane.

“Take your horse,” said the King to the peasant, “and if any one does you any harm, come to me.”

The peasant, touched and weeping, asked the non-commissioned officer, ‘Who is that gentleman; he is very good?’—‘It is the King.’—‘What, the King of Prussia?’—‘Yes.’—‘But I was told that he is very wicked.’

The King, who had heard this reply, said to me on returning to his chamber :

“You see they have made a fine reputation for me here. I must give the lie to my enemies. If we sometimes burn and pillage, it is because we are forced to do so. You must be very barbarous to torment with a light heart these poor villagers, who have nothing to do with our quarrels. If they suffer because of them, it is a necessary result of our marches and combats. I always order my troops, however, to spare what can be spared. Good evening. If your eloquence permits you to write a few lines, follow your inspiration meekly, and show me to-morrow your poetical productions.”

“Well then,” he said, when I entered, “what has <sup>14th May, 1758.</sup> your eloquence said to you? Am I to have some lines?”

‘No, Sire, my eloquence has said nothing. She is very, very stubborn, which distresses me very much.’

“Perhaps you have no subject.”

‘None, for the moment.’

“But you told me that you had seen at Breslau a very well educated young lady, in whom lodged

the soul of a Benedictine. Well, then, express to her your regrets for having left her, and tell her that all that you see here is not worth a single one of her looks, although that may not be literally true. You know that poets are not so particular, and that they permit themselves without the slightest remorse of conscience to present things differently from what they are. This poetic licence does no harm to anybody. Courage, then, spur on your Pegasus, and sing the praise of the beautiful lady with the Benedictine soul. Having been undisturbed this morning, I went over the piece I wrote at Grüssau, which is intended for Voltaire, when he does me the honour to write to me. I want it to be so perfect that he will be forced to agree that, since he left me, I have not altogether neglected that brilliant and supreme art,—

Qui, malgré ses attraits flatteurs,  
 Toujours peu sûr et peu tranquille,  
 Fait de ses plus chers amateurs  
 L'objet de la haine imbécille  
 Des pédans, des prudes et des sots,  
 Et la victime des cagots.<sup>1</sup>

“After having gone over my ode, scratched my head, bit my lips and gnawed my finger-nails, I read my *Britannicus*, and was once again moved to pity by this reading. I made a few reflections, which I will communicate to you. You will tell me whether they are sound, and you will see how I

<sup>1</sup> [‘Which, in spite of its pleasing charms, ever unsure and uneasy, makes its dearest followers the object of the imbecile hatred of pedants, prudes and fools, and the victim of bigots.’]



read everything that I read. It seems to me that Agrippina, who, in this tragedy, plays a rather considerable part, is connected with the principal subject of the play only by the weak protection which policy accords to Britannicus and Junia. In the *Rodogune* of Corneille, his Cleopatra, who, like Racine's Agrippina, is an ambitious mother, jealous of her rights, has a theatrical power lacking in Agrippina, who complains continually and furnishes no remarkable incident; but the beauties of detail cover over the defects I speak of. Nero hiding behind a tapestry is unworthy both of the majesty of a Roman emperor and of tragedy. You will tell me that criticism is easy and art is difficult. I know it; but I do not criticise; I explain to you what hurts me in the texture of this play, and I admire with all connoisseurs both the painting, so strong and true, of the court of Nero, and the skilful development of the character of this abominable man, and all the interest inspired by the virtue of Burrhus and the wise management of this excellently well-written play. Do you not think that Lisois in the *Duc de Foix* has some resemblance to Burrhus, but that Voltaire is inferior to Racine?

“I could put before you other observations which I made, but I prefer to re-read to you the fourth act, which is so pathetic and so well constructed.”

And, in fact, he did read it to me, his eyes proclaiming the emotion of his heart.

“No, I cannot read this act without paying with

tears of sensibility and admiration the homage it deserves.

“Now, I will give you a little music; if you like it, you may remain; but do not incommode yourself. My music is passable enough. I play both the solos I have composed myself, and those Quantz has written for me.”

I remained, I heard, and I admired.

“You see, my dear sir, that with the Greeks I should not have had, as Epaminondas did, the mortification of confessing that I did not know music. It refreshes me and calms, as does poetry, my cares and troubles; but I give to both only short moments, and never those which I owe to the affairs of my State. Good night. I recommend the beautiful Benedictine to your verve.”

15th May.

“Your lines, sir, your lines.”

‘There is none, Sire.’

“But you are a terrible man. What, this being with the Benedictine soul cannot inspire you?”

‘Up to the present she has not done so. Her soul is too far above mine. I should fear to mar it by singing its praise.’

“Well, then, speak of her charms, paint her elegant figure, her beautiful throat, her teeth white as ivory.”

‘But if there is nothing of all this, Sire?’

“You will suppose it, and, heavens! you will tell her that she is the most beautiful of women, and will maintain it against all comers.”

Sir Andrew Mitchell, who passed by on horseback

before the windows of the King, put an end to the conversation about poetry.

“That is an excellent man,” he said. “Of all the Englishmen whom I have seen up to the present, he has interested me the most. He has a wide knowledge of literature and history. His heart is integrity itself; he is particularly attached to me. He is only lacking in that affability and those graces which my lord Chesterfield recommended continually, according to what Mitchell tells me, to his son Stanhope,<sup>1</sup> who, of all beings I have seen, had least of what his dear papa desired. Before the battle of Leuthen, Mitchell offered me subsidies from his court. ‘I do not need them,’ I said to him, ‘for I do not know what I shall become.’ — ‘Take them all the same,’ he said good-naturedly, ‘take them all the same; you will become something great, I predict it.’ While speaking thus to me, his eyes were wet with tears. I was touched by it. Talk to him about this scene. He will describe it to you just as it was; he is a worthy man. I have here another Englishman, a Scot like Mitchell, quite simple, quite homely and altogether upright, like him. It is Grant. He is a brave officer. He is worthy of your acquaintance. Beg Mitchell to bring you together; but follow the advice I give you: beware of criticising his little greyhounds, of which he has always a few with him; beware especially of treading on their feet. He stands no jokes on

<sup>1</sup> [Visited the Prussian Court in 1752 and 1755.]

these two points. If it happened to me even to disparage his dogs or to give them a fillip, he would become furious, and would launch out against me. Judge of what he would do if you or anybody else did them the least harm. This is his weakness, his mania ; in other respects, a very civil man. I will tell you two stories of him, which paint him rather well. They amused me very much.

“ One day, in one of our quarters, I heard a noise near my lodging. I went out and asked what was the matter. An aide-de-camp said to me : ‘ Grant has placed his horses in a stable ; your grooms want to turn them out, and to put Your Majesty’s there, which are very badly housed in the place assigned to them, and Grant is making this frightful row about it.’ — ‘ Forward,’ I said to the aide-de-camp. We went to the stable, and there I saw Grant with raised stick. ‘ What is all this about, Grant, I beg you, what is the meaning of all this pother ? ’ — ‘ Why, Sire,’ he said, ‘ your rogues of grooms are trying to turn out my horses. It is in vain that I tell them that this place has been assigned to me, that, if I lose any horses, I cannot buy others, that it is better that Your Majesty should suffer this loss, which you can repair ; and these scoundrels are so stupid, so utterly stupid, that they will not agree that I am right.’ I laughed a good deal at this scene, and, clapping Grant on the shoulder, I said to him : ‘ You are right, my friend, your horses must remain and mine turn out.’ I ordered my grooms to retire,



and to be more careful, if they did not want to be beaten. 'Shall I beat them, Sire? I will do it immediately.'—'No, I don't think it is necessary for the moment.'

"This Grant, as you may understand, is a rather amusing eccentric. He came into prominence some time afterwards through an incident which is very characteristic of him. Lodging with the mayor of a village, I got behind the pillar of the house without being perceived by Grant, who, on a bench with one of my major-generals, was carrying on a lively conversation. The general complained to Grant that for a week or more I had not invited him to my table: 'I confess to you that this is making me uneasy and is giving me bad nights.'—'I cannot conceive,' said Grant to him, 'how the deuce a man can be uneasy because the King does not invite him to his dinners. What do they add to life's happiness? If the King offered me the alternative of never dining with him or of diminishing my pension, I would say to him, "Sire, diminish my pension." Eh, general, let kings and their dinners go hang. Things are only of value according as they contribute or not to our happiness and our pleasures.'

"I made off, without being perceived, and went back to my room. On the following day, I invited Grant to dinner. Although he ate with a good appetite, I said to him: 'Grant, what is it you lack, you are eating nothing?'—'I, Sire? I lack nothing, and am eating with a good appetite.'

—‘No, you lack something. Perhaps you do not like dining with me ; it is not a pleasure for you ; perhaps you are one of those people who say, “What are kings and their dinners to me if they and their meals do not contribute to my happiness ?”’

—‘Ah, Sire, I understand you,’ he replied, ‘some traitor must have betrayed me ; this is infamous !’ And he then related the whole of the conversation he had had. ‘That is the truth of the whole thing, but you must agree, Sire, that a man must be possessed of an accursed curiosity to come and overhear the conversations which two friends have together, and, what is worse still, must be very treacherous. If I knew who it was who reported to you what we said, I should tear his eyes out with my own hands.’ To prevent Grant from raising a hue and cry in the quarters, and accusing an innocent person, I told him that I was the traitor and curious person. ‘Damn it, I should never have suspected it. What I said I have said. You will agree, Sire, that I am more reasonable than the man who makes so great a pother over dining or not dining with a king, and who is disconsolate because he is not invited.’”

16th May.

My audience this day was rather singular. Entering the chamber, I saw His Majesty occupied in calculations.

“Ah, good afternoon, my dear sir. Guess what I am calculating.”

‘Your treasures.’

“Alas, I have no more. The little of what

I had was soon finished. Well, then, do you guess ? ”

‘ You are perhaps calculating what you have already spent during this war.’

“ I know it only too well ; I have no need to calculate. Come now, courage, guess ! ”

‘ Your Majesty has so many things which he may be calculating that it would be very difficult for me to hit precisely on what he is submitting to his calculations.’

“ You cannot guess. I was calculating, sir, how many minutes I had lived, and I have been at it for an hour past. What a sum—and how many moments lost ! This time which flies and never stops, this time which drags with it the days, the hours, the minutes, is received with indifference, and often without being valued in the least ; and yet nature cries out to us at every opportunity : ‘ Mortals, employ your time ; never forget what is the value of a moment on which rests the immensity of the ages, and do not, with light vanities, precipitate the flight of your days.’

“ During the whole of the time I have been occupied with my calculation, I made many reflections, part of them those I am presenting to you. There were more of them that were dark and humiliating than gay or such as I could be proud of. Yet I believe that I am one of those poor mortals with two featherless feet who have lost least of these precious moments of life. Ah, my dear sir, the fate of a king is very sad ; he is a

great burden to others ; and his state, when he does not know how to occupy himself ?

L'étiquette de la grandeur,  
 Quand rien n'occupe et n'intéresse,  
 Laisse un vide affreux dans le cœur.  
 Souvent même un grand roi s'étonne  
 Qu'entouré de sujets soumis,  
 Tous les trésors et la couronne  
 Jamais en secret ne lui donne  
 Le bonheur qu'elle avait promis.<sup>1</sup>

“ With a right employment of his time, a king overthrows all the obstacles to his well-being and to that of the people he governs.

“ While still young, I always had, happily for me, a decided taste for learning things, for cultivating my mind and rendering it fit for what I was to be one day. I felt early in life that, without the continual employment of my faculties, I should play the part of king very sadly. You can have no idea of what I did at Rheinsberg. I spent my days and nights in study. I feel now that I might have read works which would have been more useful for my station ; but by cultivating poetry, literature and philosophy, I believed that I should make myself fit for everything, and I have not made such a prodigious error either. Although studying, I did not neglect those exercises which give strength, suppleness, and grace to the body ; I learned to

<sup>1</sup> [‘The ceremonial forms of greatness, when nothing occupies and nothing interests, leaves a frightful emptiness in the heart. Often even a great king is astonished that, surrounded by submissive subjects, all his treasures and his crown never gives him in secret the happiness it had promised.’]



dance, and I dance as well as befits my station ; I could even, if need be, cut capers.”

And the King immediately cut half a dozen or so, until he became somewhat out of breath. After a few moments' rest, he cut some more, and then told me to do a few steps of the minuet, and to give my hand. He corrected me, and taught me how I should give it better.

“What an amusing spectacle for Marshal Daun and Prince Charles,” he said, “if either of them could see in a peasant's room their conqueror at Lissa cutting capers and teaching Catt to give his hand with more method and grace !”

He laughed a good deal at this idea, and I also laughed at what had just passed.

“Am I not mad, my dear sir ? What will you say of me ?”

‘That in Your Majesty's present position, you do well to seize on anything that may distract you.’

“Also, *non semper tendit arca Apollo*—you see that I still know a little Latin. I should know more still if it were not for that infernal *mensa, æ—ardor, is*.

“But enough, let us go to bed, and, without thinking of our capers, let us reflect a little, before sleep, on those hours that fly so quickly. Good evening.”

There was no talk to-day of minuets, capers, 17th May. or dancing.

“I have read a good deal this morning and this

afternoon up to the present moment. I am convinced that the general I have against me, the celebrated Marshal Daun, has not, as I have done, put his nose into the logic of s'Gravesande.<sup>1</sup> I read all the chapters on syllogisms. I confess that I find an enormous pedantry in these *Barbara*, *Celarent*, *Darii*, *Ferio*. It is true they are the general formulæ for syllogisms, but could he not have found some less pedantic? They gave me the vapours. On this occasion, I thought that it would not be a bad thing if nature had given man a chimney to his head so that the vapours that rise to it might escape, and as I was in course of making nature act, I wished also that she had given us only one intestine, like the ducks, so that we might have no colics, live without much pain, and go out like a candle. All this would not be so bad, but nature knows more than we. Doubtless, everything had to be as it is in what is called the best of all possible worlds, where men suffer in all ways, make war, burn, pillage, rape, massacre, and where they are continually exposed to treachery, the worst of all evils. Thus it is in the order of things that these poor inhabitants of Moravia, despite the portraits of the devils and the saints with which they paper their rooms, should be troubled by people whom they do not know, and should come lamenting every day about their means of subsistence which is taken away from them. I have ordered my officers to put an end to

<sup>1</sup> [Wilhelm Jacob s'Gravesande (1688-1742), professor at Leyden.]

these lamentations, to lay violent hands on this thieving riff-raff, and to return what it has stolen from these unfortunates.

“ At the first opportunity I will go out to Olmütz, to point out the positions which the troops are to occupy who are to carry out the siege. You will see, I will take this town ; I will beat Daun ; I will leave Brünn on my right ; I will march towards Vienna, and my brother Henry will go to Prague, which he will besiege and take ; we shall have peace, and I shall then read more than all the Benedictines put together.

“ The soul is a fire which must be fed, and which goes out if it does not increase. If I had not been crossed in my tender youth, what knowledge I should have acquired of philosophy and especially of history, which should be our most-preferred study. When I was quite young, I was already aware both by reasoning and by what I observed that a prince should have knowledge and should cultivate his mind by study. An ignorant prince makes a very sorry figure in the world and in his State ; but, my dear sir, what a number of obstacles there is to prevent a prince from being, from the point of view of knowledge, what it is to his advantage that he should be ; what a number of circumstances combines to make a young prince ignorant or stupid ! He has scarcely left childhood behind when he is spoilt by praise and flattery ; everything he does is divinely done : ‘ What grace Your Highness has, what good judgment ! What

a charming reply ! Did you hear his opinion on such and such a thing ? Assuredly, he will become a great man !' The young nincompoop swallows all this ; he believes that he is something extraordinary, it is so often repeated, and not a charitable soul dares to tell him that he is a poor fool, that he is less, as regards his parts and knowledge, than the child of a private individual who is neither praised nor encouraged, and who goes on of his own accord or because he is not spoiled. Doctor Swift was quite right when, tired of hearing everybody always crying out, 'Ah, how charming and learned for his age the young prince is !'—he put to the nation and to Europe this problem to solve : If princes are so perfect, so enlightened, so good, so amiable, why are they not so in their ripe age, or the moment they become kings ?

“ I remember a story which I believe I read at Rheinsberg in the *Bibliothèque Orientale*. A great king of Persia had given his son to one of his ministers, who had asked permission to retire, to be educated. 'Take my son,' said the monarch to him, 'instruct him with yours in your peaceful retreat and in the bosom of virtue and innocence.' The worthy minister divided his cares equally between the two children, and, after several years, returned with them to the King. The monarch was delighted to see his son again, but was not so well pleased to find him very inferior in merit to the son of the minister. He pointed out this difference and complained of it. The minister replied :



‘My Lord, my son has made a better use than yours of the lessons which I gave equally to both, but my son knew that he would have need of men, and I could not hide from yours, what had been so often repeated to him in his early childhood, that men would have need of him.’

“That, my dear sir, is the knot of the whole business, and what should be well meditated by those who are called upon to educate princes in general, and those especially who must one day bear the heavy burden of royalty. We should surround princes, at the moment they begin their first stammerings, with faithful men, like the wise minister I have just told you about. Private individuals have generally a great advantage over princes in the matter of a better ordered education, but sometimes there are some very stupid private individuals : every dog must have his day.

“A friend one day recommended to M. de Morrien, the very foolish husband of a very amiable and very witty woman, and grand-marshal of the queen, moreover—recommended to him the Earl of Essex, begging him to present him to the Queen. ‘I assure you,’ said this friend to him, ‘that this is not the Earl of Essex who was decapitated in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.’ And what does my simple de Morrien do, in presenting the Earl to my mother, but say to her : ‘At least, I dare assure Your Majesty that this is not the Earl of Essex decapitated in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.’

“I assure you, my dear sir, that this is not a

fable. It is a fact which you will be able to verify when you are in Berlin. I could tell you many other stories about this silly animal; but I have still a letter to send off. Good night. Think neither of princes, nor of Morrien and his stupidities, but of Morpheus, who is worth more than either. If he dispenses you his poppies, I do not know what he will do for me."

18th May,  
1758.

I was called at five in the afternoon. This was nearly always the fixed hour.<sup>1</sup> The bundle of letters which His Majesty had dictated in the morning were brought in for signature.

"You see, my dear sir, what an enormous quantity of letters."

While signing them, he ran over the contents of the reply. When he came to one of them, I perceived the fire mount to his face, and he crossed out the whole of the letter with sweeping strokes of his pen.

"This is absolutely worthless," he said, "absolutely worthless. My secretary writes that what has been sent to me is excellent, and I think it detestable."

I knew nothing of what this was all about.

"Think, then, I receive from Holland a book on politics; I tell my scribe simply to acknowledge its receipt, and the old nincompoop takes it into his head to write that the book is admirable. Devil take me if it is. If he had said that it was pitiable, he would have been right."

<sup>1</sup> Or between four and five; sometimes earlier.

In sending back the letter, he wrote beneath it :

“The book is the worst possible, pitiable, execrable, and another time don’t make me say what I do not and cannot think.”

The councillor rewrote the letter, simply acknowledging the receipt of the book, and thanking the sender for his kind attention. His Majesty signed without saying a word. The councillor swore to me by all the gods, when I saw him on the following day, that the King had commanded him to praise the book highly.

“In spite of my enormous bundle of letters, I have done many other things still, my dear sir : I have learned some Kikero (Cicero) by heart. Listen, I have hemmed,<sup>1</sup> I begin . . .”

He recited the whole passage of Cicero’s harangue for Marcellus, holding the book in his hand, and consulting it only now and again. After a short pause, he gave me the book.

“I will again declaim this very pathetic passage. Follow me in the book to see whether I miss anything ; in that case, pull me up. I believe that I shall manage it as well as a preacher does his sermon.”

And, in fact, he did not stop until he reached the words, *different peoples, formidable by their ferocity*. I believe he would have begun again, if an officer of hussars had not been announced as having come from Schnabelin,<sup>2</sup> near Olmütz.

<sup>1</sup> He nearly always began in this way, to imitate the Marquis.

<sup>2</sup> Headquarters of Marshal Keith, who was in charge of the siege.

The King spoke to him for about ten minutes, gave him a short note and dismissed him.

“ Well, sir, what have you to say of me ? Have I not learned my lesson well ? ”

‘ Very well, Sire. Your memory is quick and sure.’

“ That is because I have trained it well. I often learn by heart what has struck me in verse and in prose, and, when I happen to travel in a carriage, especially when I am going to my winter quarters, I learn during the journey several hundred lines by Racine or by Voltaire, or a few pages of Fléchier and of Bossuet. I require a longer time to get prose well into my poor head than to get verse ; but when once it is there, it is there for ever. Do as I do : learn something by heart every day. Time and your way of life permit you to do this. If you do not train your memory, it will rust, and there is no knowledge without it. Good evening ; the orator is going to bed. It is eight o’clock, and the gentleman must be on horseback very early in the morning.”

19th May.

On this day I had but a short audience.

“ I am very tired,” he said, “ and I feel that I am beginning to grow old. I went out after dinner to Olmütz, to point out the positions which the troops who are to carry out the siege must occupy. General Marschall is well provided with troops, food and munitions. Moreover, he has had inundated at least three-fourths of the ground before the works. He is repairing the fortifications, raising



the parapets, destroying the suburbs and the houses which might be in his way, and he is thus preparing to defend himself well; and we on our side will do all that is possible to attack him well and to take him. We must see what fate will decide.”

It appeared to me that His Majesty was beginning to suspect that this siege would not go off so easily as he had announced to me on his arrival at Schmirnitz, when he said that Olmütz would be taken without much trouble.

“As I have had this town invested on this side of the Morava, I have ordered that the right should rest on this river, and that the left should extend to Horka. To cover all this ground, the corps carrying on the siege will camp in five quarters.”

He showed me on his map the spots he was speaking of.

“What a life, my dear sir, what a dog of a life! When shall I get back my suppers at Potsdam, where with five or six friends, we said a lot of nonsense—forgotten next day! Maupertuis sometimes spoiled our suppers with his petty jealousy. Did you know him?”

‘No, Sire.’

“Well, the sourest physiognomy that I have ever seen; a brutally honest man, and he never gave way. He is a million leagues from the urbanity of Voltaire, but, as for his heart, the Laplander Maupertuis is a century ahead of the ape Voltaire. If the Laplander and the ape could hear me, how

the epigrams would rain upon me ! Voltaire has the weakness to believe himself passable as regards his appearance, and Maupertuis that of believing that he is equal to the eternal Father, because he flattened the poles. But I have done a good deal of backbiting, have I not ? I cannot do better than to stop and wish you good evening ; until to-morrow then, when we will talk longer together.”

I had scarcely left the room when I was recalled. His Majesty came towards me, as I entered his chamber, holding a sheet of paper in his hand.

“ You did not wish to sing your Benedictine soul of Breslau ; you left this to me, and I have done my best, sir, to fulfil your intention. You will judge. Look :

*Sur une jeune dame de Breslau à âme bénédictine*<sup>1</sup>

Un certain dieu qu'on adore à Cithère,  
M'avait, Phyllis, engagé sous vos lois,  
Je soupirais, je me flattais de plaire,  
Et mon bonheur passait celui des rois,  
Lorsqu'un démon au regard sanguinaire,  
Semant l'horreur, la crainte et le trépas,  
Démon cruel qui dévaste la terre,  
Au sein affreux des fureurs de la guerre,  
M'entraîna loin de vos divins appas.  
Hélas ! Phyllis, quelle est la différence  
Des doux transports et de la jouissance

<sup>1</sup> [‘ On a young lady of Breslau with a Benedictine soul : A certain god, adored at Cythera, had, O Phyllis, enrolled me under your command. I sighed, I flattered myself I pleased, and my happiness surpassed that of kings, when a demon with a bloody look, sowing broadcast horror, fear and death, a cruel demon who lays waste the earth, dragged me far away from your divine charms to the frightful bosom of the furies of war. Alas ! Phyllis, what a difference between the soft transports and

Qu'un tendre amour m'offrait entre vos bras,  
 Aux cris mutins, à la folle licence,  
 Aux bruits des camps où règne l'insolence,  
 Où Mars triomphe au milieu du fracas.  
 Je vois ici la brillante Victoire  
 Mener gaîment à l'horreur des combats,  
 Cent jeunes fous plongés dans la nuit noire,  
 Qui vont mourir pour vivre dans l'histoire,  
 Je vois, Phyllis, que ce peuple d'ingrats  
 Au tendre amour a préféré la gloire ;  
 Pour les plaisirs, Mars ne les connaît pas.  
 Ne cherchez point ici de ces repas  
 Où les ardeurs d'une vive jeunesse,  
 La liberté, les grâces, l'allégresse,  
 Mieux que Noël, assaisonnent les plats.  
 Loin des attraits dont brille ma maîtresse,  
 Des jeux, des ris, qui naissent sous ses pas,  
 Est-il d'heureux en tout autre climat ?—  
 Ah ! quand le cœur saigne de sa blessure,  
 Tous les festins de Nevers, d'Epicure,  
 Ne paraîtraient ni fins, ni délicats,  
 C'est aux besoins de la simple nature  
 Qu'on borne ici toute sa nourriture,  
 Dîners, soupers que l'on fait dans nos camps,  
 Sont comme ceux qu'on lit dans les romans.  
 Sobres, légers, vrais dîners en peinture

---

the enjoyment that a tender love offered me in your arms and the riotous cries, the mad licence, and the noises of the camps where insolence reigns, where Mars triumphs amid the hubbub. Here I see dazzling Victory gaily lead on to the horror of battle a hundred young madmen plunged into black night, who will die to live in history. I see, Phyllis, that this ungrateful throng has preferred glory to tender love ; as for pleasures, Mars does not know them. Do not seek here those feasts where the ardours of a lively youth, freedom, beauty and light-heartedness, better than Christmas, season the dishes. Far from the charms with which my mistress shines, from the games, the laughter which follow her feet, can I be happy in a quite other sphere? Ah ! when the heart bleeds with its wound, all the feasts of Nevers, of Epicurus, would not appear either choice or delicate. Here our food is limited to the strict needs of nature ; the dinners and suppers in our camps are like those you read of in novels. Frugal, slight, real dinners in painting

Que les auteurs préparent aux amans—  
 Lorsqu'excédé d'une abstinence dure  
 Je veux au moins, retraçant mes beaux jours,  
 Dans mon esprit rempli de votre image  
 Me rappeler ces yeux où les amours  
 Parlaient au cœur leur éloquent langage,  
 Au son fâcheux des discordans tambours—  
 Je n'aperçois que le maintien sauvage  
 Et l'œil sournois des féroces Pandours,  
 Au lieu de voir votre lèvre attrayante  
 Le beau corail d'une bouche charmante  
 Qui m'invitait à des baisers ardents,  
 Je n'aperçois, hélas ! chaque moment,  
 Que grenadiers, retroussant leurs moustaches,  
 Jurant, fumant, et buvant sans relâche,  
 En bredouillant des propos insolens ;  
 Dans nos combats, nos sièges, nos tourmens,  
 On ne voit point de ces objets lubriques,  
 De ces beaux seins à globes élastiques,  
 Qui font tourner la tête des amans—  
 Et qui peut-être aux têtes héroïques  
 Feraient souffrir les mêmes accidents ;  
 Pour ces grands saints de fastes politiques,  
 Il faut, Phyllis, des cœurs vraiment stoïques,  
 Et je n'eus point de pareils sentimens.  
 Ainsi Vénus punit un cœur volage

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which authors prepare for lovers. When, wearied of a harsh abstinence, I try at least, going over happy days, to recall to my mind filled with your image those eyes in which the Loves spoke their eloquent language to the heart, I only perceive, to the sound of the discordant drums, the savage mien and the cunning eye of the ferocious Pandours ; instead of seeing your alluring lips, the lovely coral of a charming mouth, inviting me to warm kisses, I perceive each moment, alas ! but grenadiers twirling their moustaches, swearing, smoking and drinking continually, and spluttering insolent words. In our combats, our sieges, our anxieties, we do not see those lascivious objects, those lovely bosoms with their elastic globes which turn the heads of lovers, and which perhaps would cause heroic heads to meet with the same accident. For these great saints of political pomps (?) really stoical hearts are needed, Phyllis, and I had no such feelings. Thus Venus punishes a fickle heart which unreasoningly



Qui sans raison en imprudent s'engage  
 Chez la superbe et fière ambition,  
 Qui se livrant à la séduction,  
 A d'autres dieux profanant son hommage,  
 Des mœurs du temps a pris l'infection.  
 Ainsi souvent, sans qu'il se le propose,  
 Suivant l'instinct d'une funeste erreur,  
 Le papillon voltige de la rose  
 Dans le parterre et fuit de fleur en fleur,  
 Du bien qu'il quitte ignorant le bonheur,  
 Sur un chardon l'inconstant se repose  
 Et par dépit en suce la liqueur—  
 Je crois, Madame, à la métempsycose  
 Et votre amant trop léger et mutin,  
 En s'éloignant de vos attraits sans cause  
 Du papillon a subi le destin,  
 Mais si pourtant un repentir sincère  
 Pouvait encore fléchir votre colère,  
 Si j'espérais qu'un être tout divin  
 Ne souffrît pas qu'on l'implorât en vain,  
 Je jurerais que fidèle et plus tendre,  
 Abandonnant Bellone et le dieu Mars  
 Je quitterai sans y jamais prétendre  
 Tous les lauriers de César, d'Alexandre,  
 Pour mériter un seul de vos regards.

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and rashly enlists under a proud and haughty ambition, which, giving way to its seduction, abasing its homage to other gods, has caught the infection of the morals of the time. Thus often, without intending it, following the instinct of a fatal error, the butterfly flutters from the rose in the flower-bed and flees from flower to flower; ignorant of the good fortune of what it has left, the inconstant rests on a thistle, and in spite sucks its juice. I believe, madam, in metempsychosis, and your too light and self-willed lover, in causelessly leaving your charms, has met the fate of the butterfly; but if a sincere repentance could yet appease your wrath, if I hoped that a being all divine would not allow herself to be implored in vain, I would swear that, faithful and more fond, abandoning Bellona and the god Mars, I will leave, without ever being suitor for them, all the laurels of Cæsar, of Alexander, to earn one of your glances.'

This is the only one of Frederick's poems in the Catt MS. published by the German editor. The translator is thankful, if the reader is not.]

“ Well, what do you think of that piece, knocked together this afternoon after dinner ? ”

‘ That it is charming. ’

“ If the Benedictine were to see it, what would she say ? ”

‘ She would think it pretty, but she would cross herself a good deal over the soft transports and the enjoyment which the author has not had. She would be afraid of those lovely breasts with their elastic globes, which the author has not seen, and, Sire, what would she not say ? ’

“ This is what she would say : ‘ Ah, the rogue ! How a man is spoiled with kings. ’ Now that I have crossed the barrier, it is for you to enter the race and to do better than I. ”

‘ I should like to be able to do better than Your Majesty, but it is a useless desire. ’

“ Permit me to tell you that that is somewhat the language of laziness. To refuse to sing the charms of a lovely Benedictine is unpardonable. Get this well into your head also, that the ladies are not so easily frightened by energetic expressions. They are for the most part like the sisters of Nantes, who, hearing the b— and the f— fluttering on the beak of Vert-Vert,<sup>1</sup> were not moved in the least, and pretended to believe that the pretty parrot was talking a foreign language, but when it began swearing in the name of the devil, the nuns fled all trembling with horror.

“ You will say that I am an old madman to

<sup>1</sup> [The parrot in Gresset's poem of the same name.]

entertain you with such fiddle-faddle ; but this old madman is seeking to cheer himself, and may well be pardoned. Good evening, and again, good night, and think no more of the elastic globes ; they are not narcotics for young people like you.”

“ Well, have you re-read the epistle, and have 20th May. you found nothing in it that halts ? Tell me so plainly.”

As I hesitated over my reply, His Majesty forestalled it :

“ Assuredly, you have made a few observations. What are they ? You will oblige me by letting me know them. Do not believe that I am so taken with my works that I think that there is nothing in them to criticise. I haven't that arrogance of authorship in the least.”

On this modest assurance, which I thought true, I made several remarks on the rhyme and on the expression. Some of these were approved and corrections made at once ; others were not admitted, and I was thanked for my criticism, which I had however merely put forward as doubts.

“ An author, however illustrious he may be, has always need of some one who will point out to him the faults which have escaped his notice. He becomes prejudiced in favour of his work, and, deluding himself regarding it, sees it as all good. The reader, who is less prejudiced and is cooler, sees things more as they probably are.

Racine and Boileau always consulted enlightened friends. Voltaire consulted the purist d'Olivet, and begged him to be as severe as he could in the revision of the pieces that he sent him. If these illustrious authors asked for correction, should not I, who am a wretched poet and unworthy to untie the latchet of their shoes, also solicit it? You see, sir, the obligation under which I shall be to you, if you give me your observations; but you will permit me to dispute anything which appears to me to call for dispute. I am not of the number of those who give way easily."

'I should like, Sire, to be a d'Olivet, and I should meet your desires and do for Your Majesty what the great purist did for Voltaire.'

"Without being a d'Olivet, my dear sir, you can nevertheless point out to me the faults that escape me. How many times have I not corrected Voltaire himself, yes, Voltaire."

As the King often followed up anything that related to the subject of the conversation, and exhausted it, as he used to say, he spoke a good deal of Voltaire and of his diabolical character.

"When you see him quiet, be assured that he is meditating some wickedness. His great pleasure is to set people at loggerheads, and, when he has succeeded, he roars with laughter, jumps and skips about. 'The scamps,' he says, with the laugh of a satyr, 'the scamps; that is the way to treat them.'

"One day he wrote the half of an epigram against



the good Marquis.<sup>1</sup> It was deadly. He went to see d'Argens. 'You know,' he said to him, 'how much I am your friend, and, as such, I should warn you about something that interests you. What have you done to so-and-so,<sup>2</sup> to make him so irritated with you?'—'I? Nothing; I like him, and I am sure he wishes me no harm.'—'Yet,' said Voltaire, 'here is the beginning of a piece of verse<sup>3</sup> which does not indicate this attachment you seem so pleased with.' He read the lines. The Marquis was sufficiently his own master not to forget himself too greatly: 'If Algarotti wrote those lines,' he said, 'I confess that it is shameful, and I should not have expected so treacherous a shaft from him.'

"This scoundrel of a Voltaire went to Algarotti and told him that the Marquis was irritated with him in a strange way, that he had said the most horrid things about him, and that he could not understand what had given rise to them. Algarotti immediately saw through all Voltaire's maliciousness, and, in turn, pretended to be angry with the Marquis, and, as soon as Voltaire had departed, he went to see d'Argens, and told him what had just passed; the Marquis, in turn, told him what he had just heard, and both came to an understanding not to fall into the trap that Voltaire had laid for them. They were more friendly than ever, and

<sup>1</sup> d'Argens.

<sup>2</sup> Algarotti.

<sup>3</sup> 'Cet aigrefin, plus juif qu'un juif errant.' ['That sharper, more Jew than a wandering Jew.']

Voltaire this time gained nothing but his shame. This really vile story came to my knowledge ; I said at table that Voltaire, at the moment indisposed, was a rogue and a wretch. On this being reported to him the following day, the scoundrel wrote a note to me : ‘ What, Sire, what, you treat me as a rogue, me whose heart and way of thinking are akin to yours ! ’ Could anything be more impudent ? If you saw him, he would understand your point of view so well and would say such flattering things to you that you would be astonished that any one could think badly of such a man. You would commiserate with him, and, a week later, he would play you the most perfidious tricks. Such is Mr. Arouet ; I am painting him to the life for you. If he had disappeared from the world—at a time when a little love affair of his went wrong, he took opium, and was brought round with great difficulty—the world in reality would not have lost much. I repeat that talents, even the most brilliant, are nothing compared with an upright heart. It has been said of Voltaire that he ought to be put in a cage like a parrot when you are tired of it, and great care taken how you speak before him, so that he may not repeat the last words. For my part, I said that he should be put in an iron cage, and prevented from playing the tricks of his trade : they are nearly always vile and dangerous. It is true we meet now and then one of those excellent characters who cause us to pardon human malevolence, and that of Voltaire,

which is extreme. There is nothing worse than man, be sure of that, my dear sir. It is a very sad truth, but a certain truth, unfortunately. Listen: if I pretended here, or when we are at Potsdam, to be dissatisfied with you, and said: 'Catt spends a lot of money; he must have already pilfered or profited by his post,' at first nobody would say anything. I insist: 'What is your opinion?'—'Yes,' one will say, 'it is true he spends a lot of money.' Another will smile, and will let me know by that smile that he agrees with what I say. Well, that is the riff-raff with which perhaps you will have to live. May heaven guard you from it, and give you a good night."

I was called at five o'clock and only remained <sup>21st May.</sup> a moment.

"My work to-day has been by no means light. I have arranged a little round for to-morrow at the point of day. I will tell you what I shall have done. It will assuredly not be said of me that I stand about with arms folded. It would be impossible for me to remain an instant without doing something. It is a great good fortune for every man, and especially for a prince, to have contracted early the happy habit of work. Do you know to whom I owe this habit and my taste for study which is the pleasantest thing in my life? It is my sister of Baireuth. Seeing that I never sought to occupy myself and to read, that I only loved to gad about, she said to me one day: 'But, my dear brother, are you not ashamed to be con-

tinually gadding about? I never see you with a book in your hand. You neglect your talents, and what part will you play when you are called upon to play one?' This language and the tears that followed it, touched me keenly. I began to read, but I started with novels.

"There were, however, orders to prevent me from reading. Obligated to hide my books and to take steps not to be perceived reading, when Marshal Finck, my governor, and my valet were asleep, I stepped over my valet's bed, and gently, most gently, I went into another room, where, near the fireplace, there was a night-light. Crouched over this lamp, I read *Pierre de Provence* and other books which my sister and people I could trust procured for me. This nocturnal reading lasted some time; but one night the marshal took it into his head to cough, and, not hearing my breathing, he felt my bed, and, not finding me, cried out: 'My prince, my prince, where are you?'<sup>1</sup> Everybody got up; I heard the noise, and ran to my bed saying that I had had a pressing need. They believed me; but I did not dare to do it again; the thing would have become dangerous; but I recompensed myself afterwards at Rheinsberg, where I read prodigiously. I should have read too much, if I had not been careful to make extracts from my readings. I re-read each week the extracts I had made.

"You see, my dear sir, that I have been very

<sup>1</sup> He said his r's gutturally; the King imitated him.



much thwarted, from my tender youth even. My father thought first of all that I should be very good material, of which he could make what he liked ; but he was mistaken. He did everything he could to make me a hunter, and I was so little of one that at the post in which I would be placed, where I ought certainly to have seen the game pass before me, I used to be busy reading, and I allowed buck and hare to escape, without ever seeing them even. I leave you to judge of the treatment I received on this account. I was overwhelmed with reproaches and ridicule. My indolence and inattention were the subjects of jests at my expense, and my father used to cry out in anguish : ‘ We shall never do anything with this fellow.’

“ He was absolutely against my reading, and I have perhaps read more than all the Benedictines put together. He was against my dancing, and I have danced much. I liked dancing very much, and I still like to see youth dancing ; however, since the year 1750, I have ceased dancing altogether.

“ My father wanted me to become a soldier, but he never suspected that one day I should in this respect be what I am. How astonished he would be, my dear sir, if he saw me here at Schmirnitz amidst an army that is worth a little and a cavalry especially of which he would not have the least idea ; he would not even believe his eyes.”

His Majesty often used to come back to this

idea, and he brought it forward on a thousand occasions.

At six o'clock, I was dismissed with the ordinary wishes of good night, and the King went to bed.

22nd May.

Recalled at six o'clock, I saw, on entering, the King occupied in considering the map.

“Come here, sir, and see on this map what an old soldier who got up at one in the morning has done to-day. The great Loudon, to hamper us in our foragings and to make communication with the corps of Prince Maurice difficult, took it into his head to send to Namiest and Lautschau detachments from his Konitz corps, to the rear of my troops which are encamped here, and I took it into my head to dislodge M. de Loudon. We marched on him in four columns, and all four came up to him at once, but the gentleman, warned in time, by his advanced posts, of our march, which was rather well planned, I assure you, retired from wood to wood until he reached Konitz. We fired a few cannon shot at him, and he replied. The narrow passes and the very difficult ground facilitated his retreat. We took three of his officers and forty-three men. That, my dear sir, has been my work to-day. It is not brilliant, but, in war as in everything else, a man does what he can, and seldom what he desires. That is why, if you desire to succeed at all in the affairs of this world, and especially in what concerns military operations, you must make the vastest plans, for you always fall short; but by making such

plans, you are sure to succeed on some point. A man who only makes small plans, half plans, as they say, will never succeed, be sure of that; the half-plan man has little ambition, and very great ambition is needed to make great plans in great things."

'And genius, Sir.'

"Doubtless: a great ambition excites and helps it, and sometimes serves in its stead; amalgamate all this with wisdom, and you will have an idea of ambition as it should be held by one who wishes to make a name in the world.

"The father<sup>1</sup> of my good Margrave<sup>2</sup> did not have this ambition: he used to drink, morning, noon, and afternoon after dinner. Filled with wine, he would thrash all his grooms, and say to them while thrashing them: 'I am the son of the Great Elector.' In the evening, he drank again, but he did not thrash anybody then; he talked religion, was very orthodox, and talked nonsense, so that everything should be complete. His brother was better brought up, but this upbringing was still very barbarous, as you will judge.—If a prince permitted himself nowadays such indecent language, he would not be admitted into any good company, and it would be reasonable; and I should be reasonable, too, if I went to bed. I am as tired as if I had done the finest and the most difficult things in the world. Good evening."

<sup>1</sup> [Albert Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt.]

<sup>2</sup> [Charles Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg-Schwedt.]

23rd May.

The King, in the morning, after having given his orders, had read the abridgment of Wolff's *Logic*, and he had also been reading it before my arrival. This reading, which I should not have suspected, gave rise to a conversation on his father and on the philosopher whom he had exiled.

“ You would not believe, my dear sir, that amid all this brawl I should have read the chapter in Wolff's *Logic* on the ideas of things. Yet that is what I have done, and well done even. I could discourse at length on what an idea is, how our senses lead us to think of things existing outside us, how and in what cases it is easy or difficult to acquire ideas. I could, like a learned professor, show you the different degrees of our clear and obscure ideas, and, what is sublimest of all, describe to you an adequate and an inadequate idea — fine words, you must acknowledge, but I will be satisfied by telling you that I think the sublime Wolff is mistaken in his definition of joy. He defines it as a passion of the soul excited in us by the enjoyment of a present benefit; but it can also certainly be excited by the memory of a past, or by the hope of a future, benefit. I am joyous because I hope to beat my enemies, and I am so, too, in recalling that I have beaten them. Have you read Wolff ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire, and often even.’

“ Agree that, at bottom, he is a compiler of rubbish, as Voltaire names him.”

‘ I agree that his works are too diffuse, that he



might have expounded his ideas and the system of Leibnitz in fewer words and a more precise manner; but, Sire, his method—that alone gives him a great superiority over all other philosophers. His exact manner of defining and arguing was not made for Voltaire, and I should think that he disparaged Wolff with as little reason as he praised his sage, Locke, whom he had not read.’

“That is true. How did you know that he had not read Locke?”

‘I had this anecdote from people to whom Voltaire himself confessed it: as they were pressing him closely about certain arguments he had advanced, he agreed that he had not read Locke, not even the abridgment which has been made.’

“He confessed this to me also. He is a very singular being. How can a man dare to speak and with so much praise of a work he does not know? It has been said that he makes all the books he reads; it might also be said that he often praises or disparages those he does not read. As for Wolff, be assured, my dear sir, that he has read something of him.”

‘This something does not appear to me to be sufficient to decide so positively about an author and his works.’

“You are right, but I, who have read Wolff and meditated him, find him diffuse, tiresome, fatiguing. To understand one work, you must be continually referring to what he says in others.”

‘That is the consequence of his method.’

“But this method is properly only fit for colleges.”

‘Yet Your Majesty very highly praised this method when writing about it to Voltaire. You were delighted with Wolff’s method of argument, and extolled its beauty and force.’

“That is true, but I have improved since then, and I think that you can and should write about philosophic matters in a simpler and easier manner. In spite of what I tell you of what I think of his works, I am particularly interested in his fate. You know that the — priests, jealous of Wolff’s great merit, found the means to prejudice my father against Wolff and his philosophy. A cry of irreligion—the tocsin of jealous, dark and ignorant souls—was raised. At this word ‘irreligion,’ my father, who would bear no jesting on this point, as well as on many others, had Wolff ignominiously turned out of Halle, where he was then teaching philosophy. Indignant at these goings-on, I found the means to induce my father to nominate a commission to examine the works of the philosopher. This honest and enlightened commission recognised fully Wolff’s innocence and all the merit of his works, and made a loyal report to my father. Having recovered from the unfavourable prejudices which he had been given, he was annoyed at having gone so far. He acknowledged his mistake, and set about repairing it, and did everything to induce our philosopher to come back to Halle; but the philosopher, who had been over-

whelmed with honour since his retirement, refused point-blank the offers of my father, who, by his precipitation, somewhat deserved this refusal, which hurt him keenly. One of my first cares, when I came to the throne, was to recall my philosopher, to load him with honour, and to betoken thereby the esteem which he deserved. That, sir, made me no little reputation in the literary world.

“It is a great pity that my father, who had the rarest good sense and the most honest intentions, should have allowed himself to be carried away by all the prejudices that people took it into their heads to give him, and that he should show so decided a contempt for everything that concerned philosophy and literature: they really were his antipathies.

“Remarking one day some characters traced over one of the doors of the castle of Berlin, he asked one of those who were with him what these characters were. ‘They are Latin verses by Wachter.’ At the word ‘verses,’ he sent at once for poor Wachter; he arrived; and my father said to him angrily: ‘I order you to depart immediately from the town and from my States.’ He did not wait to be told twice, and set out for Hanover.

“My father treated young Baratier, who was presented to him as a prodigy of erudition, scarcely any better. To humble him, no doubt, he asked him whether he knew public law. ‘No, Sire.’—‘Well, go and study it,’ said my father, ‘before

giving yourself out for learned.' And he dismissed him.

"I have never been able to conceive how my father, with so much good sense and intelligence, could not perceive how important it was for a prince to have subjects enlightened by letters and good philosophy, and that the greatest misfortune which could happen to a king would be to reign over subjects who were ignorant and for that reason generally superstitious. But I have chattered a great deal. What time is it?"

'Nine o'clock.'

"This is too much. Another time, I will speak watch on table. Go quickly to bed, good evening. Nine o'clock! I must be up early to-morrow."

On entering the King's room on this day, I saw, in effect, the watch on the table; the King pointed it out to me.

"A plague on Wolff and his adequate and inadequate ideas; I have hardly closed my eyes, and the few moments I did sleep were uneasy and troubled by this singular dream. I dreamt that my mother had come out of her tomb in the Dome, that my brother, the Prince of Prussia, gave her his hand and escorted her together with my sister of Baireuth. I approached to kiss my mother's hand, when my father came up to me and, looking at me with an irritated air, said in an angry voice: 'What are you doing there; withdraw as quickly as possible, and you, Margravines, come nearer.'

"Those are queer ideas, are they not? As I

This 24th  
May.



spoke of my father a great deal yesterday, the idea of him recurred to my mind during the uneasy sleep I had.

“Would you believe that there is a crowd of people who have a very strong faith in dreams, who are alarmed or overjoyed, according as the pictures presented to them by their dreams are gay or sad, and who assure you, with all possible seriousness, that, according to given circumstances, you must, in order to explain a dream, often take the exact opposite? Could there be a childishness and stupidity equal to that? If nature has taken so much trouble to hide the future from us, if every moment of our life has sworn to it to keep the closest silence about our fate, why should life contradict itself by announcing the future to us by means of a disorderly mass of nonsensical dreams? What I am saying to you about dreams I also think of so-called prophets.<sup>1</sup> Where could they discover what is to happen to us? Has nature chosen them for preference to declare the future to us poor mortals, so that we may be aware of it and troubled about it? Pure fudge, my dear sir, fudge, all of it; *credat Judæus Apella, non credo ego* [sic]. I confess to you that, one day, at the winter quarters at Breslau, to amuse myself I had one of these prophets or fortune-tellers brought to me. He calculated very learnedly that when the theatre of war was in Silesia, and Fouqué’s corps was in the mountains, this corps and its general

<sup>1</sup> Yet he consulted the prophets often enough.

would be taken prisoners of war.<sup>1</sup> I sent our prophet packing very quickly, not without making fun of him and his foolish predictions. I confess to you, however, my dear sir, that I have sometimes had presentiments that something unpleasant was about to happen to me, and I have not been able to rid myself of the impression, which remained with me several days in succession, but, seeing that nothing happened to me, I laughed at dreams, presentiments and prophets. Since then, I have thrown off all possible prejudices, and this because I set myself seriously to study the things of this world and to see them with a very philosophical eye. And you, Catt, tell me, well, quite frankly—I will not betray you—do you not believe a little in presentiments, dreams and prophets—frankly now ? ”

‘ I have the honour to tell Your Majesty that I believe in none of these things.’

“ But when you are unwell, or your blood circulates badly, or you have internal or external hemorrhoids, does it not happen to you to be gloomy, to fear imaginary evils, and to persuade yourself that assuredly some misfortune is ready to fall upon you ? ”

‘ When I am unwell, doubtless, Sire, I am not gay ; but in my discomfort I do not paint imaginary evils for myself. I have enough in the one present, and, as for hemorrhoids, I only know them by name.’

“ Ah, what a happy mortal you are, my dear sir.

<sup>1</sup> This happened, as the King said at the time.

These hemorrhoids form one of the torments of my life, and it is when they attack me that I am gloomy and I see everything blackly. I should have thought that, like the good orthodox person you are, you would not have been unwilling to admit the possibility of prophecies. There is any number of them in your holy books, which you have read, and which I possess, with all due respect to your orthodoxy, as well as you."

'Doubtless, Sire, my orthodoxy admits fully the truth of the prophecies which I have read, but that same orthodoxy excludes from my mind all idea of modern prophecies.'

"In your childhood, you must have been told of prophets, dreams and ghosts, and often these first impressions last a whole lifetime."

'We may remember them, Sire, without their influencing our way of thinking and feeling. A little philosophy corrects all those things on which our childhood was brought up, and which Your Majesty mentions.'

"You believe, however, that there are beings in nature which are called spirits?"

'If by "spirit" Your Majesty means ghosts, I do not believe in such beings, but if Your Majesty means beings distinct from matter, such as, on a small scale, are the souls which animate our bodies, I admit them fully.'

"How can you believe, for example, that your soul is a being different from your body? There is not a shred of philosophy in your belief. Do you

not see that what you call your soul grows in knowledge as your body gets stronger? Do you not see that, when Catt's body is unwell, his soul does not perform its functions so well, that the latter appears to weaken when the former weakens appreciably? *Ergo concludo* that it is the good condition of the body which makes thought, and this consists solely in its good organisation. Well, sir, I have put you between the threatening points of an unanswerable argument: what have you to reply to me?"

'That I take the liberty to ask Your Majesty what he thinks of these two arguments. It is observed that gunpowder increases in force according to the dryness of the weather; that, when the weather is wet, the powder has less effect, and that it has no effect at all when it is moistened. Is it not the dryness, therefore, which makes the force of the powder, and does not this force consist in a lack of humidity? It is observed that what is called Quantz<sup>1</sup> plays better the better his flute; that, when the flute is sharp and out of tune, he does not play so well, and that he does not play at all when he has no flute. Is it not, therefore, the flute that makes the music, and does not the musician consist in the good condition of the instrument? Your Majesty will not admit these arguments. He will say that they suppose that two things cannot be two things and improve or deteriorate at the same time, which is false, because

<sup>1</sup> The King's master for the flute.



it may be that these two things undergo the influence of the same cause, that one is a condition without which the other cannot act, or that one is the instrument of which the other must necessarily make use. In a word and Wolff's term, which Your Majesty will perhaps forgive me, *cum hoc, ergo propter hoc*, and, consequently, to judge whether these two things are different or not, their known properties must be considered; if one has a property contradictory of a property of the other, certainly these two things are different. That, I think, is the reply which Your Majesty will make to my arguments. I beg him to apply it.'

"It has already been applied: one increases in knowledge as the other grows stronger—and reciprocally: *ergo*."

As this *ergo* was what had already been said at the beginning, I did not answer further.

"There you are, sir, unable to reply. You must agree that your reflections on my argument are not logical. However, I will think of what you have just said to me, and you will see how I shall pulverise it."

He forgot so entirely the watch on the table, and the vow he had made no longer to speak so much, in the evening, on sublime metaphysics, that it was near ten o'clock when I retired. Invited to sup at the camp with General de Seydlitz, I arrived there at a quarter-past ten, and made my excuses for having kept him waiting.

‘ Assuredly, the King alone must have talked ; when he begins, he does not soon finish.’

‘ The fault was on both sides,’ I said, ‘ I chattered quite a lot also myself.’

The supper was very gay, and lasted until one o’clock ; the night was very cold ; I suffered through it, and had a violent sore throat.

The King’s messenger came at four o’clock and ordered me on His Majesty’s part to come at once to him ; he saw the sorry state in which I was, and said so. The King sent me immediately to his surgeon, Schlau, to see my throat, which was very inflamed. He made his report, and came back half an hour afterwards with a note from His Majesty :

“ Have yourself bled immediately. There is no jesting with the complaint you have. Do not on any account leave your room. Do everything to get well quickly. When you are at war, you must not be ill. *Vale.*”

On this order, I was bled at once. During the five days I kept to my room, the King, morning and evening, sent his surgeon, who, according to what he told me, had always to report how he had found me.

In the afternoon, His Majesty wrote me a short note, to which he joined this epistle<sup>1</sup> to the Marquis d’Argens :

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<sup>1</sup> *Restez, Marquis, dans cet asile, etc.*

The 25th  
May.

26th May.

“Here is some nonsense; read it. Perhaps it will amuse you, and calm your pain for a moment. Bring it back to me when you can come out, and do not forget that I like people not to spare me. *Vale.*”

The King sent word to me in the morning that <sup>28th (May).</sup> the first parallel had been opened during the night, that the enemy had perceived nothing, that they had not lost a cat even, and that they were going to erect a battery of many cannons and mortars and that I should hear a fine racket.

On the 29th, word was brought that all this had <sup>29th (May).</sup> been done, but I heard nothing of the fine racket announced.

I left my room on this day, although I was still <sup>30th May.</sup> suffering. At three o'clock I went to His Majesty's. When he saw me enter, he came up to me :

“Ah, good heavens! how unwell you look! You should have remained in your room, as I sent you word. You must not play with a sore throat. The slightest touch of a complaint of that kind may become a quinsy, and this in no time.”

I thanked him for the favour he had shown me by his interest in my health, and I should have said more if he had not interrupted me.

“It is I who ordered the bleeding. You will not perhaps believe that I have rather a good knowledge of medicine. Yet I know thus much that, in a case of necessity and even if you had a burning fever, I would undertake to bring you out

of your trouble ; if it turned to a miliary fever, then I should not meddle with it. In all the other fevers, you would see that I am not so unskilful as you might imagine. You should know that I saved a drummer of my regiment. He had a burning fever, and, as the surgeon-majors had abandoned him, assuring me that it was impossible for him to recover, I took him in hand. I ordered him to be given every half-hour a large glass of water in which a few drops of oil of vitriol had been placed, and in the space of two days I had him out of danger, not without a few jests at the expense of my dolts of surgeons. As a result of visiting the hospitals to which my father used to send me, in order that I might gain an idea of human wretchedness and might learn to become alive to it, I learned at the same time to know the different maladies, their symptoms, and the remedies that should be used, for I had everything explained to me. I learned much more still, for I had a thousand opportunities, in these places, to study moral evils, a thousand times worse than physical evils, and I date from that time the rather deep knowledge I have of the human heart ; there are not many men who can impose on me.

“To perfect my therapeutic, pathological and dietetic knowledge—you see, sir, how much Greek I know—I have often talked with Lieberkühn, one of our great doctors of medicine and a very famous anatomist ; but having observed that he always



came to see me with his pockets full of intestines, stomachs and lungs, I tired of the doctor and his speeches. On the day of one of his conversations with me, I was so sickened by a portion of brain which he drew from his pocket, that for some time I could not suffer the sight even of meat. That madman, La Mettrie, whose theoretical knowledge of medicine, as I have told you, was as great as his practical knowledge was small, gave me a good many ideas about his art, which is more calculated to kill than to save men. When he observed that his dissertations were beginning to tire me, he used always to end them by a story or so. ‘I was treating a great lady who had a malignant fever. I did not hide from her that her condition was desperate. ‘But, good heavens! M. La Mettrie, how shall I return to Paris!’—‘By the main road, madam, by the main road.’”

When the King had finished talking to me about his knowledge of medicine, I handed back to him his epistle to the good Marquis. He asked me whether I had any remarks to communicate to him. I put before him, not all those which I had made concerning his epistle, but two or three which seemed to me essential. He agreed with them.

“In a few days I will correct the whole piece. If you then think better of it, I will send it off, and you can take a copy of it for yourself. Our honest Marquis is anxious. He informs me so, without forgetting to let me know also that he is taking a large number of remedies to purify his

blood, which has been vitiated by the concern he is in over my situation and the petty worries from his people in France, who think that he should withdraw from the paternal house. You will see, and remember that I told you so, that the good Marquis will leave Berlin, if any disaster befalls me in this campaign. The soul of the Marquis is the most loving, the most faithful, the most reliable soul that I know. Unfortunately for him, it is a most timid soul. The least trifle frightens him; the least trifle robs him of the ability to decide on the best course for him to take. These unreasoning fears, indecisions, irresolutions make the misfortunes of men. Where should I be, what should I become, my dear sir, if nature had not given me a little of that bold and steadfast disposition which resolves to conquer misfortunes or not to survive them?

“But, my dear sir, you are still weak. I will not keep you any longer. Go to your lodging; take the soothing powders which I have ordered Schlau to give you three times a day. Good evening and good night!”

31st May.

To my no little surprise, when I entered the King's chamber, I saw him with a needle in his hand, sewing together sheets of paper.

“Guess,” he said to me, “what I am doing.”

‘Sewing,’ I said.

“But what am I sewing? You will not guess it, I can see. I am sewing and binding together my follies and my verses. I have been an hour at this

fine work. Would you have believed me to be a bookbinder ? ”

‘ No, I would not have suspected it.’

“ We should be ready to try everything, undertake everything, and say with M. de Voltaire : ‘ When a man has tried everything, done everything, or at least attempted everything, it is very pleasant to do nothing.’ But, my dear sir, when will come this happy time when I shall be able to rest and occupy myself with trifles ? You know, however, that everything has its sufficient reason, and this is the reason of my bookbinding. As I always re-read on one day of the week my scribblings and my extracts, I have got together all that I have scrawled during the winter season and up to to-day. This makes already no small volume. From the age of twenty-four, I have constantly gone over what I read and what I write. This method, my dear sir, is admirable ; it has served me very well ; I keep my readings clear in my mind, and I can pay in ready money if I am asked about them. Moreover, I find this pleasure in my method, that I can see how my judgment and my taste are perfected : what had delighted me in my compositions, my extracts and my readings often appears to me at the end of a few years of an unprecedented tediousness—Racine alone excepted. The more I read him, the more I find new beauties in him. As for works of philosophy and metaphysics, the more I go over them, the more I perceive in them contradictions or obscurities.

These metaphysical gentlemen, in their works, are like the Chinese when they eat together. After a moment of silence, one of the troop says: *on, hi*. Another in the distance says: *ah, oh*. 'What does that mean?' they may be asked.—'Oh, we understand each other, and there are only a few who can understand.' Thus, sir, there are in metaphysics *on, hi*'s and *ah, ho*'s as intelligible as the *ah, oh*'s and the *on, hi*'s of the Chinese; but where are there not unintelligibilities and uncertainties? They are everywhere; they press in on us from all sides. For my part, I have my system, and, with all respect to you, sir, I believe that everything is finished at death. If I am mistaken, however, I shall have the pleasure of the surprise, and that pleasure is no little one. What is your opinion?"

As I was about to answer, an officer of hussars with a letter from Marshal Keith was announced. He opened it; read it anxiously, as it appeared to me, then looked at his large map, and, after a moment, said to me:

"I must reply to the Marshal. Good evening! Until to-morrow."

1st June.

"I received yesterday, as you saw, a letter from my good Marshal. My affairs at Olmütz are not proceeding so quickly as I desired. And yet I have there the famous Balbi, who is very able in attacks on towns. I have the Marshal, an admirable man. He has all the advantages of coolness, great capacity, long experience; his valour is proved. Never



uncertain, never irresolute, he only lacks a knowledge of our language, which would sometimes save him from embarrassment when giving orders. He is a man cut out for soldiering, politics and science, and I can employ him usefully in every possible conjuncture. I have my valiant Zieten. He has vigour and audacity; success cannot elevate him any more than a reverse can make him despond. He is pleased when he can come to blows with the enemy; but there is one singular thing about him: he is incapable of executing a tolerable manœuvre unless he has seen the ground. The moment he has seen the ground, his manœuvres are excellent, and executed with a promptness, a precision, and justness that is astonishing. He needs but a moment to see and to decide.

“As for Seydlitz, I saw in him, when he was an ensign, the great general and marshal, as I saw the general in the countryman, Czettritz, and say, after that, that I do not know men.”

‘I do not say so, Sire, and I shall never say so.’

“Seydlitz is ever ready, quick in action, able to remedy all mishaps, to restore order, to push his advantages, and he is the only man whom I have yet seen who can get from his cavalry all the advantage which he does get. It is a pity both for him and for the State that he is too much given to pleasures and to women. Czettritz has not such brilliant qualities; what distinguishes him is his soundness and his straightforwardness which goes right to the point; but he is slow.

“I have given you a pretty just idea of a few of my generals ; but do not forget that the officer most favoured by fate will, in the long run, be the most skilful general ; this fate, fortune, or chance, as you will, is often stronger than the most distinguished abilities. The Marshal, whom I have depicted as a man affable in social intercourse, has a very delicate and agreeable conversation, and in this respect excels those whom I have just spoken to you about. With the gravest air, he tells most interesting stories, and makes most lively repartees. It was said, one day, at my table, that General Apraxin’s horse had been wounded at the battle of Jägerndorf. ‘Yes,’ replied the Marshal, ‘wounded with the spurs.’

“He told us at this same dinner that at the battle of Rossbach two rather pretty peasant women, having tied the hands of a French soldier, had brought him in on a leash. ‘Look, M. le Brigadier, how these w— are treating me. Is it permitted to lead a French soldier thus on a leash ; will it not be said that I am a dog, but the —, M. de Soubise, will avenge me.’<sup>1</sup>

“But this is quite enough chatter for to-day ; go and gargle your throat ; that will do your complaint much more good than my gossip. Good evening.”

<sup>1</sup> I forgot to say that the King, while speaking of the Marshal, told me this story :

“I wanted to attack the enemy near Zittau, and I asked Marshal Keith what he thought about it.

‘If Your Majesty wishes,’ he said, ‘to add to the fame of Prince Charles, let him attack.’”

He nearly always finished his conversation in this way.

The description which the King had given me <sup>2nd June.</sup> of several of his generals interested me strongly; with the idea of them thus obtained, I saw them with greater pleasure. I tried to turn the conversation on to several other officers, of whom I should have been very pleased to have had an appreciation. This was not difficult; nothing being easier, as it appeared to me, than to make the King talk on a subject which you might have in mind, unless the important interests of the State or the present operations were in question. On these, it was not so easy to discover what he thought.

I said to him quite simply: 'Yesterday, I heard with infinite pleasure Your Majesty's appreciation of several of his generals. It is pleasant to believe that Your Majesty has quite a large number of others who are worthy to serve him.'

"Indeed I have, but strike out, sir, the greater number of them from your tablets. A good general is a rare being in all countries and in all armies. It is true that I should perhaps have more of them than other sovereigns, for there are very few of these sovereign lords who give themselves as much trouble as I do to form good officers. I exercise them continually, giving them the reason of everything I do; I lecture them continually, and I am always sending for young officers who seem to me to have ability. I instruct them with every imaginable attention. Do you know

a prince who is as much of a pedagogue as I am ? ”

‘ None, Sire.’

I was hoping to hear more of these general officers whom he had formed, but I hoped in vain. The King, who was full, as he said, of what he had read in the morning, Voltaire on Charles XII., spoke all the time of this hero of the North.

“ Voltaire raises Charles XII. to the skies, and precipitates Peter I. to the bottom of the abyss. He is unjust in this judgment of his. Be assured that, if the Court of Russia gave this scamp a few thousand roubles to put Peter I. as much above his rival as he has placed him beneath, he would write that Peter I. was a general and Charles XII. a rash corporal, and then, too, what qualification has Voltaire to appraise military abilities ? He has not a shred of knowledge of our profession, as I think I have told you. He can only jibe at it.

“ After having followed Charles XII. exactly through all his operations, after having reflected deeply on them, I judge him to have been more valiant than skilful, more active than prudent, audacious, brilliant. His first three campaigns are admirable. He attacks Copenhagen, delivers Holstein, beats 80,000 Russians near the Narva, crosses the Duna, attacks the Saxons : all this is admirable. But, from this moment, no further continuity in his operations. After the defeat of the Saxons, Charles should have attacked the Tsar, and turned him out of Ingria. The Tsar once



destroyed, Augustus fell as a consequence. See how he carried on the war in Poland; and follow me on this map. He secures for himself no base of operations; he secures for himself neither the course of the Vistula nor of the Bug, where he could have set up his cantonments, and, with these arrangements, he would not have needed to fight so many useless battles.

“In the Ukraine campaign, he neglects to provide himself with stores, and why, after the defeat of the Saxons, march into a country where there are so many marshes, deserts and rivers, into a country which carries him away from the support which he might obtain from Poland and Sweden in food and recruits? Instead of these ill-devised marches, he should have crossed Ingria and Livonia, and marched straight on Saint Petersburg; by the Baltic, he could easily have drawn recruits from his own country and be within reach of them. These are simple and obvious reflections, you must feel. I could show you the mistakes he made at Poltava—especially in not taking this town, where there was a large quantity of military stores, and in waiting until the Tsar had advanced, and had chosen a good position; but I fear you may cry halt. Criticism is easy and art is difficult. I know that, sir, better than anybody; but this will, however, not prevent me, when I obtain a little quiet—alas! shall I ever?—and when my poor head has rested a little, from writing some military reflections concerning Charles XII., and

from giving a juster estimate of him than has been done hitherto. But, my dear sir, let us go to bed. We shall start from here to-morrow morning, or, perhaps in the afternoon.”<sup>1</sup>

3rd June.

The King left Schmirnitz at three o'clock, and arrived at six in the evening at Klein-Latein, where he set up his headquarters, which were covered by Lattorff's first battalion; the second occupied Gross-Latein, and Moehring's hussars were advanced as far as the heights of Czakow. This is what His Majesty told me, and he seemed to me, during the moment I was with him, to be in a bad humour, as I judged by what formed the subject of his conversation; but I could not perceive its application.

“Men speak of the great and of their good fortune with so much complacency, and so easily believe them to be the happiest of mortals, that really it is piteous. They are more to be pitied, my dear sir, than you may believe. Generally, they are badly served, or their orders are badly carried out, or, if they require something done that is difficult, their servants grow tired of them. A host of ignoramuses criticises all their steps, their camps, their manœuvres, even the most sensible of their dispositions. They do not stop there, but inquire inquisitively into their private conduct, crediting them with intentions which they do not

<sup>1</sup> The King, in effect, did compose a dissertation on this subject in 1759. I shall speak of it when the time comes, and describe what occasioned it.

possess, and crying out aloud against them over the least preference given to those who have been thought worthy of it: that is the fate of kings, and what often sickens those who cannot, like me, rise above these wretched squabbles. I think that I shall not remain very long in this confounded village, and that, in a few days, we shall return to our Schmirnitz. God knows what awaits me there. I do not know what has disappointed me to-day. I have been hypochondriacal since this morning. Perhaps the uneasiness which I feel is caused by the hemorrhoids, which are beginning again. In order not to bore you and to make you as gloomy as I am myself, I wish you good evening."

That was the whole conversation of this sitting.

I was called on this day earlier than usual. <sup>4th June.</sup> It was two o'clock. I was afraid that the King was ill, but, on entering, I was undeceived, and this caused me much pleasure.

"I was quite right in what I told you yesterday, my dear sir, that the hemorrhoids were causing my uneasiness. They appeared in the night, and so great that I lost nearly three cups of blood. I am now quite well, just like any other man, and ready to cut capers for you, if you like."

I said nothing, and there were no capers. If I had said the word, he would have cut me half a dozen immediately, which would have pained me on his account.

"I re-read this morning my epistle to the

Marquis, and corrected several lines as a consequence of your observations. You see how docile I am. As for those in which a faulty spelling, according to you, impairs the rhyme slightly, I have not been so particular. Why worry so much about it? Moreover, the rhyme is principally for the ear. To make the rhyme, I have left in my poems *crep* instead of *crêpe*. Why not? You will see that I shall be forgiven it. Send my epistle as it is to my good idler of a Marquis, and, in sending it to him, conjure him not to line his stomach any more with cassia, rhubarb and senna. You can take a copy of my epistle, and do what you like with it.<sup>1</sup> Assuredly, the Marquis will be tickled by the idea which I present to him that, quite at his ease, he can, unwitnessed, dally with his dear Babette. Who knows, my dear sir, but that my two lines may not be the means of adding a citizen to the dear fatherland. The Marchioness makes the Marquis a delicious wife. She is full of wit, knowledge, talents, and attentions for him. There are very few women so well educated as she is, and there are few to be found who show towards their husbands the attentions and the desire to please him that the Marchioness shows towards hers. The fair ladies of Berlin do not act in this manner with their tender spouses. The good husbands with us are obliged, in order to avoid daily bickerings, to share all the tastes and all the caprices of

<sup>1</sup> His Majesty always permitted me to take for my own use a copy of his letters and his verses.



their better halves, whom they spoil—as husband and wife spoil their dear progeny. You will see, when you go to Berlin, that all that I am telling you is truth, and that I am not adding one jot to the very edifying complacency which our husbands show towards their darlings, and which, be it said between ourselves, they show in order to spare their foreheads, which give them continual fears, and, sir, with all respect to you, very ill-founded fears.”

He was speaking in this way of Berlin, when a lackey brought him a parcel which had come from that place.

“Open the parcel,” said the King to him, “we will soon see what it is.”

It was opened.

“They are ruffles, my dear sir, fine ruffles of the Potsdam make. Who the devil sends me things which I have not ordered!—And how long they are! One pair will make two.”

Having said this, he took a pair of scissors, and cut them in the middle, then a second pair, a third, and so on to the sixth.

“Now I have twelve pairs of ruffles. You see what a good economiser I am, and how I take advantage of everything, and multiply everything. What need have I of such long ruffles? I do not require them to be longer any more than I require them to be beautiful, for I have the bad habit, as you have perhaps already remarked, of wiping my pen on my ruffles. If they were beautiful, I

should not have so much facility for wiping my pen. It is not the finest thing in the world to do this, but I am not very particular. Look at my boots. You will not say that they are very elegant, that they are of the finest European leather; they suit me, and that is good enough for me. Look at my coat; I tore it a little at Schmirnitz, and it was mended for me there and then with white thread. My hat matches the rest of my clothing: it all looks well worn and old, and I like it a hundred times better than if it were new. I hold neither for ostentation, show, nor vanity; that is how I am, sir, and you must take me as I am. One thing might be better, and that is my face, which is always daubed with Spanish snuff. This is an abominable habit which I have contracted; and you must confess that I have somewhat of a swinish air—confess now.”

‘I confess, Sire, that your face as well as your uniform is very much covered with snuff.’

“Eh, sir, that is what I call being a little swinish. When my good mother was alive, I was cleaner, or, to speak more exactly, less unclean. My affectionate mother used to have made for me every year a dozen shirts with pretty ruffles, which she used to send to me wherever I might be. Since the irreparable loss of her which I have suffered, nobody has taken any care of me; but let us not touch that chord. Good evening, my dear sir, good night! I would willingly wish you a Babette, but the Babettes of our camp charge

too much for the pleasures they give, if they do give pleasure. Good evening again."

The King, who had felt so well, so cheerful, so nimble, as he said, after his bleeding piles, was made very ill by the macaroni of which he had eaten too much for his dinner. He had a rather violent and painful colic, for which it was necessary to have recourse to the usual remedies, enemas, digestive and antispasmodic powders. I was not called on this or the following day. The first enemas not having operated, it became necessary to give rather a large number. This colic alarmed me, and I inquired frequently of the surgeon how it was progressing, and whether it might not have unpleasant consequences.

'None, sir, be reassured; this colic will not be the last. In spite of the hundred and one experiences which the King has had with this confounded macaroni, he always comes back to it. Even then, if he only ate a little, it would not matter so much; but he eats copiously of it. When you see him again, he will tell you that he has suffered very much from a violent colic, caused by something or other, for he eats so little! Be on your guard not to let him suspect that you know what has happened. He would think immediately that I have informed you, and he would not pardon me. Be easy in your mind; this evening perhaps, perhaps to-morrow, he will play on the flute, at the same time telling me that he is still suffering very much.'

7th June.

The surgeon was a good prophet. When I was called at three o'clock, I expressed my concern to the King at his recent sufferings.

“Ah, my dear sir, I have had the worst colic that could be imagined. It was beyond all joking, and I do not know how I brought it on myself. If you saw the little I ate, you would say: ‘But how can a man live on so little food and be so active?’ I think that my beast of a colic was a consequence of the hemorrhoids, which had suddenly stopped. How happy you are not to know this infernal malady. Before they appear, you have the most unheard-of uneasiness, and when they have come, you feel sick, and a constant desire to vomit. They would lead me a vile life, if I were not as moderate as possible in what I eat. When I suffer from this complaint, my intellectual faculties do not perform their operations with the ease which I should desire. Good or bad health forms our ideas and all our philosophy.

“Eh, sir, say after this that what you call soul is not a consequence of the organisation of our body and of the working of this organisation. If anything could hint to me that there is any difference between this organisation and what we call thought, it would be these two instances which I will give you, and which I beg you to meditate at your leisure.”

My surprise was not small when I heard him go on to quote those same two instances of gunpowder and Quantz which I had urged against him when he



had confused the organisation of the body with thought. I was very careful not to point out to him that I had quoted these two cases to him. I said simply that indeed they appeared to merit all my attention, and that I would meditate on them in the silence of my room.

“That will be excellent, my dear sir. The mind is formed by meditation, and you will see that you will owe me many obligations for having furnished you with arguments for the cause which is dear to you. What would not be your sorrow if your soul were not a wholly spiritual being! This makes it quite worth while for you to turn over and over in your mind the two instances which I have found for you. As for myself, I confess to you that I do not quite see what can be replied to them. Permit me to leave off here. I am somewhat weakened by the shock I had the day before yesterday and yesterday, and I want to go to bed early. To-morrow, we shall return to our old quarters. Good evening, no hemorrhoids, no colics, good evening.”

We arrived at Schmirnitz in the afternoon; I was 8th June. called at six o'clock.

“I shall now stay in this spot firm as a rock until the taking of the town, if M. Balbi does not lose his head and make me lose the place. To-morrow I will go and see a little of what is happening. I have ridden about a good deal to-day, and led my hemorrhoids and my colic a dance. We must not listen to and coddle ourselves, my dear

sir: nothing is more dangerous. Although ill, I breast wind and tide. I am on horseback when others would be complaining and lying in their beds. We are made for action, and action is the surest specific against all physical ills. I say physical, for, as regards the ills of the heart, if anything can benefit and soften them, it is a little philosophy, the scope of which is not appreciated in our colleges.”

He then quoted these lines of Chaulieu to me :

Heureux qui, se livrant à la philosophie,  
A trouvé dans son sein un asile assuré.<sup>1</sup>

“I was told a very amusing thing during the march we made. A peasant aged eighty-four was carrying water to the trenches. One of my officers, touched by the sight of this poor devil bent under the weight of years employed on this work, which must have been very painful for him, said to him in a friendly tone: ‘My good man, you are too old to stand so much fatigue; you shall not carry any more water.’—‘Oh yes, sir, I will carry it, and I can carry it without doing myself any harm; but I have one favour to ask of you, and promise me, I entreat you, to grant it to me: and that is that, when the town is taken, you will have my Bible and my Psalms returned to me which the Jesuits of Olmütz have taken away from me. If you will do me this favour, which will make me happy, I undertake to carry joyfully into the

<sup>1</sup> [‘Happy is he who, devoting himself to philosophy, has found in its bosom a sure sanctuary.’]

trenches as much water as you like.' The officer promised him that he would have his books. There, my dear sir, is that not a man consumed with zeal for the house of God, and is that not edifying?"

'Very edifying, Sire.'

"I think so, too. Believe me, people of this kind often think very much better than others who, by the education they have received, should think still better. The story of this peasant reminds me of a pandour who had deserted, which is very rare among these rascals. He was brought before me: 'Where do you want to go?' I asked him.—'To Rome, sir.'—'And what the deuce do you want to do at Rome?'—'I have served the Emperor for so long, sir, that it is quite time that I served God for once.'—'You do very well,' I said to him. 'I could wish that all your comrades had the same idea.' My pandour burst out laughing, and replied: 'That would not be so bad for you, sir.'

"This rascal had wit, although full of devotion for the Holy Father.

"A French soldier, made prisoner at Rossbach, had very little of it. If my pandour had heard him, he would have murdered him, I think. This rascal came straight up to me after the battle: 'My brigadier, I have come to ask your permission to return to Auvergne, where I came from.'—'Doubtless you wish to go and hear a few masses?'—'Damn the masses and the Pope, who allowed us to be beaten, and I believe, my brigadier, that you



think as little of the Pope as I do.' I laughed at the speech of this rascal, who did not stop saying that he didn't care a hang for the Pope. While he was talking, he saw one of our non-commissioned officers who was gathering all the prisoners together and arranging them in three ranks according to height. 'Look, my brigadier, look at this b——. He is trying to drill us in the Prussian way, and we have only been here a moment.'

"I will be more reasonable than the non-commissioned officer, and will not drill you any longer to patience; I have abused yours too much. Good night! To-morrow, I will go and see the siege, and drill my people to greater activity."

9th June.

"I went, I saw and did not conquer either the slowness of my people in the siege operations or the stupidity of those who, through false news, lose cannon and men. Imagine, my dear sir, that they had not begun until this morning to fire from the batteries of the second parallel. If this continues, we shall be here until the end of the ages. Think, too, that Le Noble, having swallowed the false news that the convoy of munitions and flour commanded by General Puttkammer had already passed through Gibau, and, on this news, wishing to take the road to Sternberg, from which place he had started, allowed himself to be surprised and attacked by Lanjus, who captured from him three pieces of cannon and 200 men. Is that not enough to make one go to the devil, if there were one? It is in this way that, for one thing somewhat



passable, I learn at least twenty unpleasant pieces of news ; and now say that the life I lead is not a dog of a life.

“ Le Noble, in order to get out of his difficulty, needed only a little firmness and good sense, that good sense which generals can never do without.”

‘ But, Sire, this good sense of which you speak, and which is called common-sense, does not seem to me to be so common : it is very rare even.’

“ Your reply is very just, very just. When I was younger, I used not to believe the sense so rare ; but the more I live the more I am convinced that it is very rare indeed.”

I saw with a great deal of concern that the slowness of the siege operations, and especially the loss sustained by his general, Le Noble, whom he had praised at a dinner, as I had learned, gave His Majesty some ill-humour and anxiety. To divert him from the disagreeable ideas that occupied him, I told him that, the evening before, a rather amusing story of Count de Turpin had been related to me, the count ‘ to whom Your Majesty had given permission to travel in Prussia to see the troops there.’

At the sound of the word Turpin, the King said to me animatedly :

“ Eh, the Count did this journey with me.”

And without waiting for my story, he asked me :

“ Who told you this ? ”

‘ Sir Andrew Mitchell.’

“ It was I who told him. Well, I was travelling

in Prussia with my Lord Count Turpin, and I ventured to ask him : ‘ What do you think of this kingdom ? ’—‘ It is very handsome, Sire.’—‘ If it were yours, what would you do with it, Count ? ’—‘ Sire, I would sell it very quickly, and go and devour it in France.’

“ Did Mitchell tell you the story in this way ? Is it as I am telling you ? ”

‘ It was thus, Sire, that Sir Andrew told it to me.’

“ What an amusing gentleman this count is ! He has the poetry mania, and he composes lines with twenty-two syllables : ‘ Why hamper ourselves, Sire ? We must have liberty.’ ”

“ Among the Frenchmen who come to us, there are some very amiable, well-informed and exceedingly well-bred persons, but the greater number of them are flitter-brained and without any manners whatever. We had the Chevalier Cogolin. He insisted, while journeying from Potsdam to Berlin, that the postillion should go at full speed in our confounded sand. The postillion replied that the horses could only advance at a walking pace. The Chevalier became angry, gave the postillion a thwack with his stick : ‘ Rogue, I will teach you to advance.’ The boorish postillion replied by two very well placed buffets, threw the Chevalier and his valise out of the carriage, and made off. Poor Cogolin, quite bewildered, remained on the high road with his valise ; he loaded his back with it, and in this way quietly arrived in the town. He wrote me from there his lamentations on what

had happened to him. I replied, commiserating with him very much on his misadventure, and begging him not to be so prompt another time in using his stick on our postillions—who of all their kind that exist are the most boorish possible. ‘What an infernal country,’ he said, ‘this Prussia is, where you cannot thrash a postillion without bringing blows on yourself.’

“I have seen several Frenchmen, who, without any learning whatever, started to write a book. Ho, there, bring us ink and paper; we must compose some verses. But, as I told you, I saw at Berlin some very amiable and very interesting Frenchmen—especially the Count de Gisors. For his sake, I pardon the ridiculousness of all the others.”

I saw with pleasure that there was no further question of Le Noble and the siege, and doubtless he would have continued to speak to me of this Count Gisors who appeared to interest him so much, or would have told me some more stories, if two letters had not been brought to him. After having read them :

“Here is some work I must do, a letter in cipher which must be deciphered; so good evening. If you compose any verses this evening, don’t compose any of twenty-two syllables.”

I found the King at five o’clock occupied in <sup>10th June.</sup> drawing on paper the palace of Sans-Souci, the gardens, the colonnade, the Chinese palace, of which he had formerly made me a sketch.

“ See the fine work I am on here.”

Having perceived at the end of the terrace, near a small grove, a kind of Mausoleum, I asked him if this was a work of antiquity.

“ No, my dear sir, that is a vault. I will have it surrounded by cypresses, and it is there that I shall rest. Don't you think that I shall be comfortable there ? ”

‘ Your Majesty puts before me a very distressing idea.’

“ And why should we not come to an end one day ? And should we not prepare for this end, and prepare with a tranquil mind, and I more than others. ?

Moi qui sens qu'à grands pas la vieillesse s'avance,  
Et qui par mille changemens  
Connais déjà la décadence  
Qu'apporte le nombre des ans.<sup>1</sup>

“ And then, after all, my friend, what is death ?

La mort est simplement le terme de la vie,  
De peines, ni de biens, elle n'est point suivie,  
C'est un asile sûr, c'est la fin de nos maux,  
C'est le commencement d'un éternel repos.  
Et, pour s'en faire encore une plus douce image,  
Ce n'est qu'un paisible sommeil  
Que par une conduite sage  
La loi de l'univers engage  
A n'avoir jamais de réveil.  
Nous sortons sans efforts du sein de la nature  
Par le même chemin retournons sur nos pas.

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<sup>1</sup> Chaulieu : To the Abbé Courtin, Epistle 26. [‘ I who feel that old age is advancing with great strides, and who by a thousand changes know already the decay which the multitude of years brings on.’]



Eh ! pourquoi s'aller faire une affreuse peinture  
D'un mal qu'assurément on ne sent point là-bas ?<sup>1</sup>

“That, sir, is a good philosopher, who excels, as regards reasoning, all these philosophers in *us*, is that not so? Chaulieu appears to me a philosopher who says to himself: ‘I wish to make myself happy in this world, and, to attain my end, I will endeavour to free myself from all constraint, to throw off every inconvenient yoke; I will refuse myself no pleasure, which alone will be the unique object of my life; I will combat with all my forces everything that runs counter to my views, which seem to me very wise.’ It is thus that I figure the philosophy of M. de Chaulieu, ‘regarding Charon and his bark with contempt.’”

To turn aside a conversation which appeared to me to serve no purpose, and which was not likely to finish soon, I began to praise his good memory:

‘Your Majesty has a very tenacious memory. It is astonishing how much you have been able to learn by heart, and with what accuracy you remember it all.’

“It is because I have exercised my memory a good deal; but this is not to the point. You condemn, I suppose, the ideas of my divine Abbé,

<sup>1</sup> Chaulieu, Epistle 27: To Madame la Duchesse de Bouillon. [‘Death is simply the end of life; it is followed by no pains or benefits; it is a sure asylum, and the end of our evils; it is the beginning of an eternal rest. And, to imagine it in a pleasanter guise, it is but a peaceful sleep that by a wise care the law of the universe persuades never to have an awakening. We leave the bosom of nature without effort, and return on our steps along the same road. Ah! why make a dreadful picture of an evil which assuredly is not felt on the other side?’]

and, like the orthodox person you are, you throw yourself headlong on the immateriality and the immortality of the soul.”

‘ I do not know, Sire, that I throw myself headlong, without reflection, as your phrase would convey, but—I agree, I believe in its immateriality and its immortality.’

“ How is it possible, my friend, that you can believe in these things ? Do you not see that the soul is only a modification of the body, and that, consequently, it is absurd to maintain that it can subsist and be preserved after our body is destroyed ? They depend so much the one on the other that the one cannot subsist without the other. And tell me in good faith, can you in any way at all form an idea of an immaterial being, depict it, as I have depicted my Sans-Souci ? If you can, depict for me, I beg you, this immaterial being.”

‘ I could not do so, Sire, because an immaterial substance has neither form nor qualities perceptible to the senses, but I can very easily convince myself that what thinks in me has no parts. Can one logically deny the possibility of an immaterial substance because it cannot be represented in a material form ? And, in supposing once more, Sire, that mutual dependence between the body and spirit, which is very true, may I legitimately conclude, from the dependence of these two things, that these two things are the same or identical ? The taking of Olmütz, let me suppose, is announced at this moment to Your Majesty. Your joy is all

the greater because you were not expecting, at this moment, this success: what connection, I venture to ask, is there between the effect and that which causes it? An articulated sound has struck and vibrated in your ear and your brain; that is a physical effect; but this vibration is followed by the feeling of joy, and this feeling is followed by the idea that the plans which Your Majesty has conceived will now be proceeded with. Is there in this feeling and in this idea any resemblance to the vibration of the acoustic nerves? Do you find a mechanical connection between this vibration which you have experienced and the ideas which have followed it?’

“Sir, sir, your imagination leads you astray. You have a holy horror of the materiality of your soul, and it is your imagination which is behind what you say.”

‘I think rather, Sire, that it is my understanding which rises up against that materiality, and which dictates my language.’

Wishing to cut short a conversation which distressed me, I confess, because I thought I perceived a little acrimony,<sup>1</sup> I said:

‘But, Sire, at Klein-Latein, you did me the honour to quote to me two instances which you had hit upon, that of the gunpowder and of Quantz, saying at the same time that these instances seem to hint that there might be a real difference between our body and that which thinks in us.’

<sup>1</sup> I often observed this.



“That is true, but these instances do not prove the immortality of the soul, with which you were imbued in your tender childhood, and you would not dare to cast a philosophical eye at this assertion of immortality, which you would fear to see overthrown ; your philosophy, like mine, would see no necessary connection between the immateriality of your soul and its immortality.”

‘ I confess frankly to Your Majesty that, in fact, I do not see this necessary connection. I do not know the nature of my soul well enough to conclude decisively that after death it will remember its former state, or that it will be able to continue to exercise its faculties. The idea and hope of the immortality of my soul are founded, not on what I know of its nature, not on what I believe about germs and fecundation, but on what I know of God and his perfections. I am well aware that I cannot use this proof against philosophers who would deny the existence of a God and of his attributes ; but these philosophers will never prove to me that man really dies.’

“Eh, who is denying the existence of a God, not I ! He must be admitted, when we see in this universe both evident purposes and very simple and often striking means of attaining them. This world cannot be the effect of chance, there is too much order in it. I do not know God, but, as I have told you, I always worship him sincerely. Believe me, at bottom, there are uncertainties everywhere, but I have my system. I save myself



by saying that everything we see is eternal, that everything is finished at death, and, if I am mistaken, my dear sir, I shall have both the pleasure of the surprise, and that of talking with you again above or below, as you will ; but let this be as late as possible. Perhaps I should have been as good a believer as yourself, if, in my youth especially, and in the following years of my life, I had seen the good believers follow and practise the duties which their belief prescribed. For example, my father was certainly a very good believer and very good Protestant. Being very ill, he was advised and exhorted even by the priests to be reconciled with his brother-in-law of Hanover,<sup>1</sup> who had upset his bile : ‘ You must write to him, Sire, and tell him that you have forgiven all his faults.’— ‘ Well, then, write, but at any rate, if I recover, do not send my letter ; send only if I should die.’

“ And yet, I should have said to my father, your resentments, hatreds, angers, desires for vengeance must be sacrificed to the religion which you believe ; we must pardon seventy times seven the brother who offends us, without which there is no pardon for our offences. Ah, my dear sir, how the bad examples of parents, in all cases, lead youth astray and corrupt it, and how much should fathers and mothers endeavour to present but good examples to their children, who model themselves always on what they hear and on what they see done. Then, indeed, could these parents

<sup>1</sup> [George II., King of England.]

say: 'Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me.'

"Do not laugh at my erudition and my doctrine; nothing is truer than what I tell you. Permit me to add one thing, and that is to wish you a good night, an immaterial and immortal soul, and that, if one day you have children, you may constantly set before them, with your better half, good and salutary examples. You see that, without thinking altogether in your Calvinistic manner, I yet think in a good moral fashion; but good evening; or otherwise, I shall keep you here for another hour; I think it is very nearly eight o'clock?"

'Nearly ten, Sire.'

"Ten? Why, this is beyond a joke!"

I thought so too a little, for I was occupied until midnight in writing down this singular conversation.

"Do you know, sir, that I shall become annoyed with you, if you keep me another time until ten o'clock, I who am usually up at three!"

'We must not then debate any more those questions on which I have not the good fortune to agree with Your Majesty.'

"Ah, I see, I see! You are afraid that I shall sink your religious system."

'I do not fear so at all, Sire.'

"But confess to me, you would think it a great pity if Catt were not immortal. You are pleased at the idea of immortality; it tickles you, and so you believe your soul to be immortal."

'It is not at all, Sire, because I desire that I

believe it immortal; but because this is founded on proofs which will never be destroyed. And suppose even that I believe it because I desire it, would Your Majesty wish to tear from me this pleasant hope, to annihilate this mainspring of my actions, and to take away from me what is a consolation when I am being attacked by those evils to which we are so much exposed in this life ? ’

“ Ah, my dear sir, since you speak in this tone, I will take good care not to take away from you an illusion that pleases you, or to destroy your hopes and reduce you to despair. If it is a barbarous thing to warn a man of the unfaithfulness of his dear spouse, it is a hundred times more barbarous to put before him a system that will destroy all his hopes.

“ And then, too, in following your system, you have, I agree, no risk to run, whether you are mistaken, or are not mistaken.”

I had a great desire to put the alternative before him, but the fear of again entering into a useless dispute, which would perhaps have again prolonged the sitting until ten, stopped me. After this day, the King spoke only at long intervals on this subject, about which he appeared to me only to have very vague and undecided ideas.

The King came back to what he had said to me the day before on the quarrel of his father with the Elector of Hanover, and on the often dangerous examples which parents gave to their children.

“ When I spoke to you yesterday of my father,

you must not imagine that he gave us bad examples; he only gave us good ones. The faults which his children may have committed are their own faults; my father did not occasion them. He was really in all respects a good man; he was literally a philosopher-king in all the force of the term. Perhaps he went too far in expecting too much of humanity, and in desiring that his subjects and all those about him should have the austere morals which he had himself.

“Now, if you would like to hear a new solo by Quantz, I will play it, and this music will not keep you until ten o’clock. I tried it after dinner. It appeared to me to be superior to what I have had of him in this kind: this man does not grow old.”

This solo lasted an hour, and this time I had a pleasant evening which left me time to sup.

Called at four o’clock, I heard the reading of the tragedy of *Mithridate*, and again the King said:

“At least, at each act, I may take a pinch of snuff.”

He declaimed several scenes by heart, with that interest he put into everything that he read and that he had a mind to consider good;<sup>1</sup> the remarks were not forgotten.

Ainsi ce roi, qui seul a, depuis quarante ans,  
Lassé tout ce que Rome eut de chefs importants.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Here a note, for when he had no mind to consider a thing good, prose or verse, he read it in a disjointed fashion, as I have already shown (p. 39); he did the same with prose works.

<sup>2</sup> [‘Thus this king who alone, for forty years, has tired all the important chiefs in Rome.’]



“ With your permission, M. Racine, Mithridates only tired for thirty years these conquerors of kings.

Je m'en vais t'étonner : cette belle Monime  
Qui du roi notre père attira tous les vœux,  
Dont Pharnace, après lui, se déclare amoureux.<sup>1</sup>

“ Admire, my dear sir, the art of Racine ; with what art he follows the rule of poetic art. The subject is never made known soon enough.

Mes soldats presque nus, dans l'ombre intimidés  
Les rangs de toute part mal pris et mal gardés.<sup>2</sup>

“ What a true and vivid picture of this nocturnal combat, with its confusion and disorder, and of the army scattered in the horrors of night ! How admirable Racine is in the picturesque turn he gives to his situations !

O ciel ! Quoi ! je serais ce bien heureux coupable  
Que vous avez pu voir d'un regard favorable !  
Vos pleurs pour Xipharès auraient daigné couler.<sup>3</sup>

“ Ah ! M. Racine, I am sorry to tell you so, but this is not from a poet of the heart.

“ There are many passages in this scene in which Monima can be compared with Paulina, and which show that, if Corneille's lines have thought,

<sup>1</sup> Xiphares to Arbates, act i. scene 1. [‘ I am about to astonish you : this beautiful Monima, who was the object of the desires of the king, our father, with whom, Pharnaces, after him, declares himself to be in love.’]

<sup>2</sup> Act ii. scene 3, Mithridates to Arbates. [‘ My soldiers almost naked, and frightened in the dark, the ranks everywhere irregular and ill kept.’]

<sup>3</sup> Scene 6, act ii., Xiphares to Monima. [‘ O heavens ! Am I then that happy culprit on whom you could have looked with so favourable an eye ! Have your tears deigned to flow for Xiphares ?’]

Racine's have feeling. In my readings, I have always made this kind of comparison. Nothing, my dear sir, is so useful in forming your taste.

C'est à Rome, mes fils, que je prétends marcher,  
Ce dessein vous surprend ; et vous croyez peut-être  
Que le seul désespoir aujourd'hui le fait naître.  
J'excuse votre erreur : et, pour être approuvés,  
De semblables projets veulent être achevés."<sup>1</sup>

When he had finished reciting these lines, he said to me :

“ I who am a scamp and very inferior to the great Mithridates, the dread of the Romans, I dared to hold his language, in writing to my brother Henry : ‘ My dear brother, I will march against the enemy ; I will drive them from their entrenchments ; I will beat them ; I will besiege Breslau ; I will push the Austrians right back into Bohemia. This language will surprise you.’ And I kept my word.

J'ai besoin d'un vengeur, et non d'une maîtresse.<sup>2</sup>

“ Do you not see there, sir, the line of the Cid :

Nous n'avons qu'un honneur, il est tant de maîtresses,<sup>3</sup>

and that fine reply of good Henry iv. to the lovely Gabrielle on the subject of Sully : ‘ I could better

<sup>1</sup> Act iii. scene 1, Mithridates to Pharnaces and Xiphares. [‘ It is to Rome, my sons, that I intend to march. This design surprises you ; and you believe perhaps that despair alone now gives rise to it. I excuse your error ; and, to be approved, such projects must be carried to an end.’] His Majesty recited all this scene without missing a syllable.

<sup>2</sup> Act iv. scene 5, Mithridates alone. [‘ I have need of an avenger and not of a mistress.’]

<sup>3</sup> [‘ We have but one honour : there are so many mistresses.’]

dispense with ten mistresses like you, my love, than with a servant like him' ?

Ne livrons pas surtout Mithridate vivant.<sup>1</sup>

“ That is a death worthy of this great king, that is the outstanding trait of his character, and it is thus, my dear sir, that a king should die. The hatred of Mithridates for the Romans is so well developed in this play, his courage and boldness so strongly expressed, his jealousy even so well rendered, and the end of the hero so noble and great, that you must be in a very bad humour if you will not, in consideration of his sentiments, pardon his weaknesses, and, on account of the masculine and sublime tone of the poet and of his versification which is always pure, elegant and harmonious, allow him the portraits and the situations of his plays, which are often the same, or which seem so to most readers whose sight is not keen enough to perceive the different shades of these characters, which alone make all their difference. However, I have read you a good play, and, although an outsider in these matters, have ventured to make some poor remarks on it. I am going to play my solo over again, and, as you heard it yesterday, I wish you good night.”

The King, being very much occupied by some <sup>13th June,</sup> despatches which he had received, did not send <sup>1768.</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Act v. scene 4. [‘ Above all, we must not give up Mithridates alive.’]

14th June. for me on this day, nor on the following because of a new indigestion. I was uneasy about his health, but his surgeon reassured me.

‘We have eaten to-day,’ he said to me, ‘a little too much of a pie; we have had an indigestion, an enema, and my powders will do wonders; to-morrow, he wishes to go to the siege; he is already in bed now, at seven o’clock.’

This 15th  
June.

As I was on the point of entering His Majesty’s chamber at about six o’clock, the surgeon said to me: ‘For the love of heaven, do not speak to him, sir, of colics, indigestions, enemas and powders. The King does not like to be spoken to about them. He will tell you, in his own way, all that he wishes you to know about them.’<sup>1</sup>

I entered.

“Here I am back from my ride to Olmütz, where I saw the works in connection with this interminable siege. I am beginning to believe that M. Balbi is a bit of a fool. On the night of the 13th to the 14th, General Draskovich with 700 men attacked the batteries of the left, and, with 300, those of the right. Although they were rather sharply repulsed, and suffered a loss which is not to be disregarded, they nevertheless spiked 7 guns, but my artillerists very quickly brought them into use again. Draskovich left 3 officers and 70 men on the spot; we made 32 prisoners. All this

<sup>1</sup> One of the King’s hussars who understood French explained to me the surgeon’s speech. He was a malicious or rather a spiteful man, as I had occasion to observe, where His Majesty, whom he did not like, was concerned.



is a very wretched business, but what of that, when you cannot do more.

“I gained this at least, in the ride which I have just taken, that I shook up my hemorrhoids so well that they did not trouble me any more; but yesterday, my dear sir, they tired me more than I can describe to you. I should not have been capable of conversing with you.”

“I passed a rather uneasy night, which was 16th June. perhaps a remainder of my hemorrhoids and my ride yesterday, which shook my blood up too much; as a man’s blood, when it is more or less agitated, can, like the fever, lead to more or less serious consequences, I cannot apply myself to-day either to poetry or to reading of any kind. I see everything darkly. There are luminous days, my dear sir, and there are very obscure ones also. I suppose it happens to everybody to have such days alternately: have you any idea of the meaning of what I am saying?”

‘Yes, Sire, when I am feeling unwell, I see all things black, as all things look rosy, when I am in good health.’

“Confess that we are poor, wretched creatures.”

‘I agree as regards myself, Sire.’

“I also agree as regards myself, and whether I am well or not, I experience this influence of the days, and that of the 18th June is antipathetic to me; it is from such a day that I date the commencement of my misfortunes.”

I had no trouble in guessing at what he was thinking, since he said to me immediately :

“ I dare assure you that, if on this day at Kolin my orders had been obeyed, I should have won a battle which would have at once put an end to this disastrous war.”

I was expecting a description of this battle, but I was mistaken,<sup>1</sup> the King adding immediately : “ Do not think, sir, that I am like a Roman, believing in good or bad days. I believe all days are alike, bringing with them without distinction both good and evil, and, if I think this 18th day a fatal day, it is because it has been so for me and for humanity ; if only my siege would come to a successful end, many disasters would very quickly be made up for.”

On the subject of the siege, I asked His Majesty for permission to go there, when I had left him.

“ Eh, what infernal curiosity ! What will you do there ? ”

‘ See the trenches and obtain some idea of a siege ; perhaps I shall never have the opportunity again.’

“ As I read in your eyes that you are like a nun who is devoured by a desire, go, sir, go ; but what is the time ? ”

‘ Nearly seven o’clock.’

“ Start off then ; you have only just time ; but call first of all on Wobersnow, and beg him to give you two hussar orderlies who will show you

<sup>1</sup> He described it to me afterwards on our succeeding marches.

the road ; otherwise you might go astray, or be taken, and they would ask what the deuce your business was there. *Bon voyage*, and no unfortunate misadventure.”

The King sent in the morning at ten o'clock <sup>17th June.</sup> to ask whether I had returned ; they said no ; the messenger came back at one o'clock ; not returned yet ; a messenger came at five o'clock ; I had just arrived.

‘ Sir, His Majesty has already sent three times, sir, to your lodging to know whether you were there ; come quickly therefore, I beg.’

“ Ah, Mr. Traveller,” said the King, “ what a long while you are on your rides.”

‘ When you are sent as a courier, Sire, you are at the bidding of him who sends you. I have come in all haste as a courier.’

“ What do you mean ? ”

I then handed him a letter from Marshal Keith, who had begged me to dine with him, and to wait until he had written a report to the King of an affair which had taken place, requesting me to hand it to him immediately on my arrival.

His Majesty read this report, opened his eyes in astonishment, threw the letter on his table, looked at his map, began to write, sent for a messenger, whom he despatched to the marshal with a letter : all this was the work of a moment.

He considered his map again ; then, coming up to me, he said :

“ Marshal Keith wrote to me that Saint-Ignon

had twice attacked poor General Meier, who was killed, that we had lost in this attack several officers and about fifty men, and that the enemy had been repulsed with some loss. And yourself, what did you see, what did you learn ? ”

I said nothing of the skirmish, which had not been a very mild affair ; I replied simply that the sapping operation had been carried a fair distance, although a cannon of the left flèche on the glacis, which fired unceasingly on the sap head, had very much inconvenienced the sappers, and that we had only lost a few men.

“ You must be tired ; go to bed, and, if you will listen to me, do not go any more to the trenches. You have seen enough of them for your military course. Good evening ! I have still several letters to write.”

As for the affair of General Meier of which the King spoke to me so lightly, here are the details as the Marshal gave them to me while we were at dinner.

General Meier, on the information that he would be attacked by General Saint-Ignon, reinforced himself with Nimschöffsky's battalion, and was all night under arms. The patrols which the general had sent out during the whole of the night did not return, and, although all was quiet, at dawn on the 17th, General Meier should naturally have suspected, not seeing his patrols reappear, that the enemy was perhaps marching on him. Instead of being on his guard, he sent back Nimschöffsky's battalion, dismounted his cavalry, and ordered a



forage. Then General Saint-Ignon, of whose march no one had any idea, fell unexpectedly on Meier with three regiments of dragoons, one of hussars, and a pulk of uhlans and several hundred Croats posted as a support for the cavalry. Our dragoons, surprised in their camp by so many troops, could not hold their ground, and lost their tents and their equipment. Meier retired to a position before the village of Drozdein, where Nimschöffsky's battalion had been stationed. The enemy pursued him, but, stopped by the cannon, retired on Gross-Teinitz; and M. de Meier, with the rest of his eight squadrons and the battalion, marched to Holitz. In attempting to defile by the embankment which leads to the Morava, the enemy attacked him for the second time, made him cross it at the gallop, and even mixed with our dragoons. Then our free companies posted on the other side fired so opportunely on the enemy that in his turn he retired with some loss. Marshal Keith, who came up with several battalions and Würtemberg's dragoons, crossed the Morava, joined General Meier, dislodged the enemy from Holitz, and occupied this village without further opposition, while M. de Saint-Ignon made for Prerau. The Baireuth regiment lost in this attack 56 men killed, 5 officers, of which number was General Meier, and 380 either wounded, captured or missing: that is the truth about this affair, of which I said nothing.

In going to His Majesty's, who had ordered me to be in attendance at two o'clock, I learned from <sup>18th June</sup> 1758.

an aide-de-camp that he had received the sad news of the death of the Prince of Prussia, his brother, and that he had been severely struck by this blow. I entered, and I saw the King seated, with his elbow on the table, and a handkerchief in his hand, with which he was covering his forehead. He looked at me for a few minutes, then, rising, he said to me, with his eyes full of tears :

“ Ah, my friend, what disastrous news I have received ! My poor brother is no more,” and he sobbed.

I was keenly touched, and mingled my tears with his. He saw my sorrow, and, placing his hand round my neck, which surprised me, I confess, he said to me : “ My friend, he is no more for me, this brother whom I have so much cherished. You are very good to grieve with me ; the life which you lead with me is very sad, and how many misfortunes still await us ! But, my friend, I can support them all : losses of the heart, of friendships are the sole heart-rending and irreparable losses : my dear brother is no more.”

After having told him how much I shared in his grief, how much I counted in that moment of bitterness on the force of reason and of his philosophy, which, while approving such legitimate and natural tears, could yet moderate and mollify them—

“ I am satisfied of what your kind heart dictates

to you in this moment, but, my dear sir, I have called and

J'appelle à mon secours raison, philosophie,  
 Je n'en reçois, hélas, aucun soulagement :  
 A leurs belles leçons insensé qui s'y fie :  
 Elles ne peuvent rien contre le sentiment.  
 J'entends que la raison me dit que vainement  
 Je m'afflige d'un mal qui n'a point de remède ;  
 Mais je verse des pleurs dans ce même moment  
 Et sens qu'à ma douleur il vaut mieux que je cède."<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, he did shed tears ; after an hour of a sitting so painful for the heart, the King said to me :

“ I cannot, my dear sir, stay in my room any longer ; I feel as though I am stifling. I am going for a ride on my horse, and to breathe the air and give myself up alone to my sad thoughts. If you will have the kindness—this was his expression—to return again at about five o'clock, you will oblige me. It is pleasant to pour out your grief in company with the very rare persons who know how to share it with you.”

The King in fact did set out on his horse, and rode at a walking pace for about an hour, followed by a groom. I saw him start and return, with a pain I cannot describe.

I appeared at five, as he had ordered me.

“ My ride did me some good ; I can at least breathe ; but my heart is still oppressed. I cannot

<sup>1</sup> Chaulieu, 22 : On the death of the Marquis de la Fare, in 1748. [‘ I call to my aid reason, philosophy : I receive from them, alas ! no comfort : he is mad who trusts in their fine lessons : they can do nothing against our feelings. I hear my reason telling me that I grieve in vain for an evil which has no remedy ; but I shed tears at that same moment, and feel that it is better to give way to my sorrow.’]

reconcile myself to the idea of seeing a brother whom I cherished carried off, and, as heaven is my witness, I cherished him sincerely; and believe me that there are very few men like me who love their family as I cherish mine. Nothing equals my satisfaction when I can give them real proofs of this, and I have never missed an opportunity, my family must do me that justice. Private individuals cannot love each other more than I love my relations, and this attachment is not common, I confess, among those who are often so improperly—at least as regards morals—called the great of the earth. I must tell you with the same frankness that this brother whom I have just lost, and whom I shall long regret, for so many reasons, deserved all my affection, for the excellence of his heart, his attachment for me, and his zeal for the country.”

The King would have doubtless said more on this subject, if a heap of letters had not been brought in to him.

“Here is work to do. Good evening, my dear sir, and think of me in my bereavement.”

19th June.

In the forenoon, I had the honour of seeing Prince Ferdinand at the giving of the parole, and of expressing to him all my regrets for the loss he had just sustained. He invited me to dine with him in his tent with Sir Andrew Mitchell. This good and worthy prince seemed to me to be extremely affected. He wept very much on account of the death of his brother, who was dear to him. He asked me how the King was.



‘Very sad,’ I said, ‘and very distressed by this bereavement, which he was not expecting.’

At three o’clock I was called.

“You see in me a man who cannot get over his surprise and console himself for the loss of a good brother. He died as the result of an apoplectic fit which seized him while he was painting and his secretary was reading to him. My sister Amelia, who was there incognito, seeing that my brother was worse than he usually was on these occasions, sent for all the doctors and surgeons of Berlin.<sup>1</sup> There was a consultation: Mutzel, notwithstanding the bleedings which the surgeon, Puchtert, attached to my brother, had performed on his own account, wished to bleed him again, because clots of blood were coming from his nose, which they were often obliged to pull away, they were so thick and hard. The others, who were as stupid as they could be, were of a contrary opinion, in spite of the reasons and instances put forward by Mutzel, and they held that they believed my brother to be too weak to be bled any more. My dear brother was the victim of this stupidity, and was seized with a fit that ended his days. My sister, who remained outside the door and did not dare show herself, had a priest brought in, who perorated at his ease before my poor brother, who already was no more. He was opened, and it was found—which is a very lamentable thing—that he had the healthiest body that

<sup>1</sup> Mutzel, Lesser, Meckel, Pallas.

had ever been seen. I wrote to my sister Amelia, telling her that he must be given the funeral honours which are due to him, and which he deserves, but, alas, my dear brother will be unconscious of this honour, and he will not see either my regrets or my tears. And what increases infinitely, my dear sir, these regrets, what makes this loss still more deplorable, is all that passed between us in the last campaign. You will no doubt have heard speak of it.”

I did not wish to reply, but he asked me with so much insistency to tell him all that I had learned on this subject, he repeated so many times that he would appreciate my frankness, and that this would prove to him that I was sincerely devoted to him, that I did not hesitate to satisfy him.

‘I have heard it said, Sire, that Your Majesty, in the camp at Leitmeritz, having sent for the Prince, gave him instructions on the way he was to act with the army entrusted to him, that the Prince, in order to be quite sure of having understood Your Majesty, wrote to you a letter in which he recapitulated the instructions given, and asked whether or not he had understood perfectly; that Your Majesty left the Prince without any reply, and that, in his operations, he followed what had been enjoined upon him; that, on account of the burning of Zittau and the lack of flour and bread, the Prince marched on Bautzen; that Your Majesty, hearing of this march, wrote to the Prince

a very strong letter in which you overwhelmed him with severities, and that Your Majesty yourself, having arrived from the neighbourhood of Pirna with a regiment of hussars at the headquarters of the Prince's army, turned your back on your brother, when he came up to you, and said to General de Goltz : Go and inform my brother and all his generals that, if I did what was right, I should have the heads of all of them struck off their shoulders.'

At this word, the King rose, and said to me in an animated tone :

“What you have just told me about the striking off of heads is arrant calumny. You should know me well enough already to judge me incapable of holding such language and of having held it towards my brother. Some of the censorious fools round about must have certainly given you this detail, which is incompatible with my way of thinking, with truth, and with common-sense.”

‘Nobody here has spoken to me of this affair, Sire (and this was true). Your Majesty wished me to tell you sincerely what I had learned before having the honour of being in your service ; and I have done as I was ordered.’

Believing that I perhaps regretted having obeyed him, or that I was too much struck by his warmth when he cried out against calumny, he calmed down, and, in a very restrained tone, he said to me :

“I appreciate the veracity of your language.

Continue, as occasion occurs, to speak to me always in this way, and you will not repent of it. I will tell you another day the truth of the matter, and of this quarrel, which cost me many tears, and you will then see that, if private individuals are often the object of the most atrocious calumnies, kings are as much subject to them as they. Good evening. If fools, whoever they may be, and the place is full of them hereabouts, ask you what I may have said about my brother, disregard both their questions and their persons. Good evening. I am going to bed. I must be up to-morrow for a grand foraging which I have ordered."

I was already on the threshold of the door, when he said to me :

"One word more : come, what do you think both of my dream of a while ago, in which my father, conducting both my brother and my sister of Baireuth, exhorted them to go forward, and of what I told you a few days ago of the fatality of certain days ? Weigh all this before going to sleep, but mind you, do not believe in dreams or ever mark fortunate days with white, and disastrous or unfortunate days, fixed by a dreadful fatality, with black ; for the belief in dreams and the notion of favourable or dangerous hours for affairs like those I speak to you about are the fancies of imbeciles. Good evening."

20th June.

I was called at five o'clock. His Majesty appeared to me very fatigued and still sad.

"With 11 battalions and 2000 horses, I made



a grand forage this morning in the direction of Prödlitz, and I reconnoitred the enemy army. His front is inaccessible. Everywhere, there are only narrow passes through which it is impossible to march on him ; and his wings are so well supported that it is impossible to turn them. At our approach, they lined up for battle, and, when they saw what was really afoot, they all returned to their quarters.

“ I thought, my dear sir, that this excursion to-day would give some diversion to my gloomy ideas, but they remain still the same. To the pain which I feel at the loss I have sustained is now added that of hearing through you that I am badly judged in the difference I had with my good brother. This, my dear sir, is the truth of the matter. After the unfortunate affair at Kolin, which so cruelly upset my hopes of taking the army shut up in Prague, of making a prompt and certain peace with the Austrians, perhaps on the field of battle itself, and of marching next against the French, whom we should have driven helter-skelter into their provinces, I was, as you know, obliged to leave Bohemia. I sent my brother in advance, with a part of my beaten army. I gave him instructions, it is true, and they were necessary, but if I did not reply to his letter in which he asked me whether he had understood me perfectly, did not my silence prove that he had quite seized my idea ? And, if this had not been the case, should I not have set right those ideas which, if ill under-

stood, might have had unfortunate consequences? I recommended him to consult nobody, and told him that I relied entirely on his intelligence, as I counted on his bravery—my dear sir, it is not possible to be braver than he was—that, however, if he wanted to consult any one, Winterfeldt was the man on whom he could rely, and that he should only consult him: finally, that Zittau was to be held at all costs. What happened? They retreated and retreated. Winterfeldt proposed to reinforce Zittau. He demanded with insistence to be allowed to advance in the neighbourhood with a corps to defend the approach against the Austrians, who, according to information Winterfeldt had received, were making movements on that side. Winterfeldt, against whom, I know not why, my brother had had grievances for some time, was not listened to, and the treacherous, inept advice of the famous Count de Schmettau was followed instead. Zittau was bombarded by the Austrians; we were forced to abandon it, and fell back across country on Bautzen. At this news, seeing that all was lost for us, I could not contain myself. I wrote a furious letter, it is true, in this first moment of anger which made me see all my contriving on the point of dissolution. I used expressions which were too strong, I confess again, and I was sorry on that account as soon as my blood began to cool a little; but, my dear sir, put yourself for a moment in my place. Was it not cruel to see my brother, his family, the country

and myself the victim of dangerous counsels, because of his inclination to listen for preference to what pleased him in those inconsiderate counsels given by persons who preferred their own interests to his, to mine and to the country's. My brother left for Dresden and quitted the army. Doubtless, in the crisis in which I was, he would have come back to me, if certain rogues whom I know too well had not stirred up the fire, and had not repeated to him every day that he could not remain in the army with honour, nor forgive me the manner in which I had written to him: is not all this abominable? How they continued to embitter him during his stay at Orangeburg! A part of the horrible things vomited out against me has come back to me. I really pitied my dear brother for listening with so much complacency to so devilish a race.<sup>1</sup> If he had known it as I knew it, he would have repulsed it with horror. Ah, my friend, how unfortunate princes are, when they will only have near them people who flatter them, or when, without wishing it, they have those people who

par de lâches adresses

Des princes malheureux nourrissent les faiblesses,  
 Détestables flatteurs, présent le plus funeste  
 Que puisse faire aux rois la colère céleste.<sup>2</sup>

“If my brother had only had around him his aide-de-camp Hagen, his secretary Hainchelin, and another couple of such upright souls, his life

<sup>1</sup> He named several of this crew.

<sup>2</sup> He had already recited these lines to me (p. 84).

at Orangeburg would have been calmer, and his heart more disposed to come back to mine. I am certain of what I state, for his heart was goodness, uprightness and charity itself. My knowledge of this made still more heart-rending for me the bitterness against me which had been instilled into him. Hasty as I am, if we had been left to ourselves, we should have very soon forgotten our reciprocal wrongs."

In this very long conversation, in which the King set out to correct what I had told him, in the name of the public, about his conduct towards his brother, he made no mention of the question of the cutting off of heads. I did not think of raising it myself, as this would have given rise to a new conversation, which would have led still further, and the conversation I had had was long enough, as the King remarked himself.

"But I have talked too much, my dear sir : good evening. May your ideas not be those which, from all appearances, will pursue me even to my bed. Good evening."

21st June.

"You see me," said the King, "with Lucretius, which is my breviary when I am downcast. What is the time ?"

'Five o'clock, Sire.'

"Over three hours ago I sent one of my aides-de-camp on an errand, and he has not yet returned. The gentleman apparently fears to get pneumonia by running too quickly. You have no idea how soft some of my gentlemen are."



This language made me fear for the poor aide-de-camp, but I saw with some pleasure, when he entered to make his report, that he was let off with a ‘the deuce, where have you been all this time?’ and that the King said to him, when he was handed a note :

“Ah, good, go and rest now. I misjudged, sir. He made all possible despatch : justice must be done to whom it is due. He did not find the Marshal at first at his quarters, and that caused the delay which was making me impatient. You see, my dear sir, that I can acknowledge my faults, and make amends for them by confessing them.”

‘Such confession and making amends are the marks of a great man.’

“There is nothing but what is very natural in all that.”

‘And yet, Sire, there is nothing so rare as these confessions.’

“Not with me,” he said, “and you must have observed this.”

The conversation ended there, General Seydlitz being announced.

“Not a moment’s rest,” he said to me. “I have so many things to do, so many misfortunes to fear, that I am in the agony of a burning fever when people who bear news are announced ; but we must see what it is. *Adieu*, good night, until to-morrow.”

In the morning, at about ten o’clock, while His <sup>22nd June.</sup> Majesty was gone to the camp, the village of Schmirnitz was set on fire, a wretched porter,

smoking in a shed where there was straw, having caused this misfortune. The King, seeing this great fire from the camp, came at full speed to assure himself of what was happening. He gave orders, but everything became a prey to the flames. Of this great village, there only remained the house in which the King lodged, and the shepherd's hut which had been assigned to me for my dwelling. A mother, endeavouring to save her child, was suffocated with him in the flames, and both partly burned. This sad spectacle and that of so many unfortunates harrowed my soul. Nothing could be heard but cries and lamentations. The owner of the cabin in which I lodged, a sick man, aged more than eighty years, resisted those who tried to save him : ' Eh, let me finish my days here ; must I live only to see people in wretchedness and to be still more so myself ? ' He was torn away by main force ; at the moment he was carried into the courtyard, the house gave way. The few cattle that remained to this poor man which they had been unable to save were crushed by the fall of the barns. At the crash of the fallen house and the sight of his lost cattle, the old man finished his career. His wife, the children, a few neighbours who had come to his aid, all surrounding and huddling on the dead man, made most lamentable cries, and in turn embraced my servant, who spoke their language, and whom they had seen eagerly trying to save my poor host.

Amazed and keenly touched by the spectacle of

the morning, I gave the King in the evening at six o'clock an account of the impression which this spectacle had made on me, and of what concerned my poor host and his family.

“The old man is happy, and his family is not the only one wretched. This is another burnt village for the Austrians. This fire gives me also an infinite sorrow for these poor people. It will be much if my enemies do not place it to my account. These gentlemen are very fond of attributing to me the abominations of which they are themselves capable. You must confess that war is a very cruel thing. What a life for these poor soldiers who, while they are being drilled, receive more blows than bread, and who, though they may be less beaten when on campaign, retire most of them with gashes and minus a few limbs. The peasant suffers much more still; he is reduced to the last extremity, and often perishes of hunger! You must agree that the Queen’s obstinacy and my own make many people unhappy, and that there are very few wars as disastrous as the one we are waging now; friend and enemy, all suffer; and who knows, my dear sir, who knows whether all this is not the beginning of the pains and of the desolation full of abomination, to speak with the prophet!”

‘This picture which Your Majesty paints for me of the events which may yet happen is a very sad picture: may heaven preserve us from them.’

“And do you believe, sir, in good faith that it



troubles about the quarrels, the squabbles and the slaughter which scamps like us make? Do you believe that, if when walking in my garden at Sans-Souci I tread on an ant-hill, I think even that there in my road are little beings who are running about worrying themselves? Would it not be ridiculous of these animals to think—if, by the way, they are endowed with thought—that I know that they exist and that I should take some account of their existence? No, my friend, unburden yourself of this self-esteem, which misleads you by presenting heaven to you as being ceaselessly occupied with your preservation, and get this well into your head, that nature does not concern itself about individuals, but about the species: the latter must not perish. What reply can be made to all this? That a king may very well be unaware that while walking he is treading on an ant-hill which happens to be in his way; that, preoccupied with the important affairs which demand all his attention and all of which he often cannot control, he does not think of ants and whether any exist in his gardens and in his parks.”

‘All that may be so, Sire, but what I cannot very well understand is that nature, as Your Majesty calls this principle which produces and preserves, can preserve the species without concerning itself in any way about individuals whose assembly forms that species of which Your Majesty does me the honour to speak to me.’

“Wait a moment, sir, you are caught: therefore,



all that which you cannot conceive is not and cannot be ? A pretty logic ! ”

‘ It would, indeed, be so, if it were mine, as would be the statement that all that which you imagine, by the fact that you imagine it, is incontestably true.’

He did not answer, but he wished me good night, and this was better for the King, who appeared to me to be very fatigued and heated by the dispute.

So many reports arrived this afternoon, so many 23rd June. orderly and light-cavalry officers from the Marshal, from General Seydlitz and from all the posts, that I was not called. The King was occupied until nine o'clock in the evening. As this coming and going of officers, which did not cease, was a quite new thing for me, I asked an aide-de-camp what it was all about. He told me that they were anxious about a large convoy which was on the road ; that the siege was going but slowly, and that the enemy army apparently intended to make a move ; that there were still other points, the exact nature of which he had not been able to ascertain ; and that these officers and light cavalrymen were bringing reports on these different matters from their commanders.

‘ There are many new anxieties preparing for His Majesty ; I fear the worst, like you,’ said the aide-de-camp to me.

I was called at five o'clock ; I found His This 24th June. Majesty before his large map.

“ Come here and see what is now the position of

the great Marshal. He has moved his right, which he has advanced to Dobromielitz,<sup>1</sup> where he has been pleased to set up his headquarters. He is meditating something, and no doubt has his eye on the large convoy I am expecting, which is of the utmost importance for the siege; so I shall take my measures accordingly to assure its safe arrival: this convoy is no small matter. It is bringing me provisions, munitions, and, sir, what we call the sinews of war, not to use a very ignoble word, money. Finally, with my fine convoy I shall have both recruits and convalescents and at least 1200 horses. You will agree that all this is of no small importance and is something to tempt the greed of my enemies. The Marshal has already set Loudon moving, who, with 4 battalions of regular infantry, 2 regiments of dragoons and several thousand Croats, is getting ready to leave Konitz, where he is encamped, to advance towards Sternberg; I will have him reconnoitred. My day yesterday was so filled and worried with a host of reports that I hadn't a moment in which to speak to you. These reports will become more frequent still; we are approaching the *dénouement* of the play; the interest and the activity of the actors are about to increase. Our learned gentlemen jeer at our profession; Voltaire turns it to ridicule. The profession is a bad one on account of the evils

<sup>1</sup> "Write this fine name on your tablets"; each time he showed me places on the map, he told me to write down their names: "For how is it possible to remember them without? These names are so often barbarous."

it causes ; but a great deal of ability is needed to exercise it with success. That scoundrel of a Voltaire understands nothing of it ; he told me that to read about battles bored him to death, and that he learned nothing in doing so ; but, I said to him, ‘ when I read the campaigns of Prince Eugene, of Montecuculi, of Luxembourg, what I read gives me a thousand ideas, extends my views, and I always turn much of it to account.’ My scoundrel at this burst into a fit of laughter : ‘ What ! all this study to learn how to kill men ; this is really piteous ! Is war then so complicated a business that a wider intellect is needed to understand it than is required to draw up the plan of a poem ? ’ You see that he did not understand in the least what he was chattering about. How, I beg you, would this scamp manage matters if, as so often happens to me, a crowd of reports, usually contradicting one another, were brought in to him, and if it were necessary for him to guess at the plans and tricks of an enemy and to decide promptly in an affair which would be of the utmost importance ? M. de Voltaire, M. de Voltaire, you don’t know what you are talking about, and you chatter on this matter as your Lusignan chatters on the stage.”

‘ Sire, I see an officer of hussars coming.’

“ Another confounded letter ! My dear sir, there is no end to them. Good evening ! I must speak to him and reply : this will be my soothing powder for a good night’s rest. What an infernal life ! ”

This 25th  
June.

On this day, I was only a minute with His Majesty, who was waiting for several letters which he had to sign.

“It is certain,” he said to me, “that my Marshal has executed the movement which I showed you yesterday on the map. The admirers whom he has in his pay will say that this movement is a masterpiece of tactics, as they said—which I learned from an officer whom we made prisoner—that all generalship had been astounded by the bold and skilful march made by the great Marshal on the 17th from Gewitsch to Ewanowitz, resting his right on this town, and his left on the mountain which is to the right of Prödlitz; but you can see here, on this map, that this so-called masterpiece was carried out behind a crowd of narrow passes which separate us from them, and the greater part of which is occupied by M. de Loudon. We haven’t so much brag, sir, although, if you will allow me to say so, we often make similar marches; we are modest and we do not blow ourselves out like frogs. But here come my letters; I have still a few points to add. Good evening, and, if one day you command troops, never forget, whatever fine movements you may execute, it is fine to be modest.”

This 26th  
June.

There came this day, in greater number than on the 23rd, a crowd of reports, and I was not called. Several aides-de-camp and the worthy Sir Andrew Mitchell whom I saw, all expressed anxiety to me about the convoy and about the siege.

‘The King,’ said Sir Andrew to me, ‘must be



very much preoccupied for him to have dined alone. Perhaps also he is in a not altogether rosy humour. When this happens, he usually keeps himself company. However, do not worry yourself too much over what these people here say. It seems to me that they are very easily alarmed, and often about nothing at all. It is astonishing that the King, in his position, can be as gay as he is. What a man! Nature rarely offers such men to the world.'

In the evening, at seven o'clock, His Majesty 27th June. commanded me to come to him. I found him sad.

"You see me still preoccupied and still gloomy. I cannot forget the loss I have sustained in my good brother's death. All the worry by which I am at the present time surrounded cannot banish for a moment the idea of my brother, whom I shall always regret. Ah, my friend, how cruel are the losses of friendship! And what a dog of a life is the one I have been leading for so long!

"This is and will always be my refrain, until all this ends. I do not yet see any light on this end that I desire: do you?"

'How, Sire, could I perceive it, if it escapes even Your Majesty?'

"Let us meet what happens, then, with resignation. Moreover, my dear sir, believe me, it is a good thing to be ignorant of the future. If I had known fourteen years ago all that was to happen to me up to the present moment, what bitterness I should have felt before feeling what I do now!

“Do you know that the great Marshal has advanced towards us with all his army ?”<sup>1</sup>

‘No, Sire.’

“Well, then, look at my map. He has made this march, and is encamped between Klenowitz and Dobromielitz. Every day, he comes out to reconnoitre us, as if he were proposing to attack us. How I would bless heaven if it would inspire its favourite with the idea of trying odds with us; but nothing of this will happen; it is I whom heaven reproves, because I hear neither sermon nor mass.”

‘Did Marlborough hear many, Sire?’

“Oh no, of course; he was wiser as also he was cleverer than my lord Daun whom I have in front of me. I believe that all these movements of theirs cover the march of detachments against my convoy;<sup>2</sup> but how the deuce is one to guess at their goings-on behind a hundred passes and a mass of light troops? But let us forget Daun and his passes and his masses, which he listens to devoutly; and let us go to bed. I must be up early tomorrow. May the God of peace be with you.”

I was called at eight o'clock in the evening. His humour like the sky was very gloomy this evening. He inveighed against those who were conducting the convoy, and against poor Balbi who was directing the siege operations; without

<sup>1</sup> This was apparently because of his fear that the King would reinforce the escort of the convoy.

<sup>2</sup> In effect, under cover of these movements, General Siskovich with six thousand men was despatched to the wood of Stadt-Liebe, there to await our convoy: this manœuvre was only discovered afterwards.

articulating the grievances he had, he complained of the misfortune of having to deal with blockheads, and to see upset by them arrangements which had been made with every possible precision.

“Following up my idea that troops were despatched yesterday against my convoy, I ordered Zieten to march at dawn to meet it with a few battalions, several regiments of cuirassiers, and a few squadrons of hussars. I hope that he will arrive in time and prevent any misfortune. I am quite sure that this brave man will do all that he can, and that he will display his intelligence.<sup>1</sup> In spite of my confidence in him, I am not without uneasy fears, I confess. I think, my dear sir, that, in the position in which I am at present, this uneasiness and fear will not scandalise you.”

‘No, certainly, Sire. I think them natural in their place——’

“What do you mean, in their place? Have you learned anything, tell me frankly?”

‘Nothing, Sire. I have not left my lodging, except to see Sir Andrew Mitchell!’

“Well, what did he tell you? What does he think of all this?”

‘That if the convoy arrives, Olmütz will be taken in a few days.’

“*Fiat voluntas tua!* Adieu and good night. As

<sup>1</sup> During the day it could be seen distinctly by the smoke of the cannon that the convoy was attacked already.

for me, I shall sleep badly. I say again, my life is a dog of a life ; with this, I pray God, etc.”

29th June.

“ Good news,” said the King, when I arrived at six o’clock, “ good news ! Krockow will arrive this evening at the siege with the advance-guard and the head of the convoy : 37 waggons loaded with money, 72 with munitions, 7 squadrons, 7 battalions, and nearly 600 hussars, all which is not a bad head.”

‘ Indeed, no, Sire, I hope that the rest of the convoy will arrive as safely, and that Your Majesty will soon have news of its happy arrival.’

“ We must not flatter ourselves too much yet, sir. Let us be modest, await the event, and submit to it, whatever it may be. You are young, and you hope ; I am already old, and I fear more than I hope : this is as it should be. When I was your age, I thought that everything I did would succeed, and that misfortune could never touch me. Experience, and harsh experience, has corrected this little excess of fervour of self-esteem. The school of misfortune is a good school, my friend ; I learned, in my books of philosophy, to bear up under all evils ; but neither experience nor philosophy has been able to teach me to bear up under losses of friendship. I still have many things to attend to, so I wish you good night. I only sent for you to acquaint you with the arrival of my head (of the convoy) ; pray for my tail ; the siege has great need of it.”



This day was a day of anxiety. Every moment officers arrived with the announcement of ill news. On my way to the King's quarters, where I had been ordered to be at six o'clock, I met General de Seydlitz who was coming away. This 30th  
June.

'Things are going badly, my friend,' said the general to me, 'and what is worse still is that His Confounded Majesty will not believe the reports that are made to him. He loses his temper when reports that don't please him are given to him, and imagines generally that we have been inaccurate in our observations. I told him what I had observed, and what I believed were the movements of the enemy. Let him profit by my information, or not, as he pleases; I spoke as a good patriot.'

I entered His Majesty's chamber; he was studying a map. He remained absorbed in this for a good quarter of an hour without perceiving that I was there; finally, he saw me, and I remarked that he was very gloomy.

"I have just been informed of so many new happenings, of so many kinds, that it is enough to send you to the devil: the enemy who has executed different movements, and is preparing to execute still others; the unfortunate tail of my convoy which is in jeopardy; the difficulty of obtaining exact news of it, since all the passages from Gibau to Olmütz are occupied by the enemy—all this, sir, does not make one laugh uproariously. My f— engineers, who opened the trenches in a

Pantagruelian fashion, have got me into the mess in which I am ; they have done nothing but play the fool ; they are b—— in oil who are not worth a pipe of tobacco. Provided my Zieten has done his work well and has not failed me, perhaps everything will not be so bad as they tell me. It is cruel to depend on so many people who lose their heads at the slightest difficulty. I do not feel rosy to-day, my dear sir, and, in order not to bore you and pass on to you my gloomy ideas, I will wish you good evening. Never have a siege to make, but, if you ever are exposed to this misfortune, never have engineers who open the trenches for you at 1800 paces from the glacis. My night will not be a brilliant one ; I am about to send still further orders to Retzow for him to march in force and endeavour to take and save as much as he can.”

1st July,  
1758.

The sad news, which I had learned in the morning from the aides-de-camp, from Sir Andrew Mitchell, and especially from General de Seydlitz, who had been twice to see His Majesty, that the convoy had been entirely destroyed, that we had suffered a considerable loss in killed and in prisoners, that the enemy had made a movement, crossed the Morava, and taken a camp on the heights of Gross-Teinitz and of Czechowitz, this sad news gave me a thousand anxieties, and, I confess, made me fear a conversation with the King, if there were to be one in such a moment of preoccupation and crisis. I did not avoid it, being called at five o'clock, and my surprise and joy were great when,

on entering, I saw the King come up to me with a serene and tranquil air,<sup>1</sup> and say :

“ Ainsi, mon cher, le vent, la fortune ennemie.”

Hearing verses, I was very quickly reassured.

“ My convoy lost, the lack of munitions, the clumsiness of my self-styled engineers, the movements of the enemy, everything forces me to quit Moravia. To-night, the siege will be raised, and early to-morrow morning I shall leave, and, to the astonishment of the great Marshal, who will open his eyes wide, I shall take a road which he will little suspect. I will not distract him in those acts of devotion which he will impose on his army, and which he will very devoutly accomplish himself, in order to render thanks to heaven on my departure from these regions. Let him sing hymns and halleluiahs at his ease, provided we gain a march on him, and my siege train is not broken up. All the necessary measures have been carefully thought out. You must go to bed very early, and I shall do the same, for we must be ready at three o'clock in the morning. You will see that Bohemia which you have never seen, but we shall not be able to have there such long, such quiet, or such frequent conversations as those we have had in our poor Schmirnitz, for I foresee a good deal of work and

<sup>1</sup> I have constantly remarked since that the King, once he had resigned himself to any unfortunate happening and had made his plans accordingly, was as calm, as serene, as gay, as gentle, as he was the contrary when any disquietening news was brought to him, or news of a misfortune which he could not avoid. [‘ Thus, my dear sir, the wind and enemy fortune.’]

from many directions. I hope that I shall be able to cope with it all, in spite of the fact that everything is in a state of extremity which it is impossible for you to conceive, but, my dear sir :

Que fais-je en cette extrémité ?  
 J'oppose encore plus de constance  
 A cette longue adversité,  
 Qu'elle n'a de persévérance.<sup>1</sup>

“ I apply to the fate which pursues me what our friend, Chaulieu, applied to the gout which tormented him ; I have not less than he of that firmness which is of so great help to us in bearing up under the harshness of fate.

“ Go and put your kit in order ; sleep peacefully, as I expect to do. Until to-morrow, in some infernal hole, I suppose. Good evening.”

<sup>1</sup> [‘ What do I do in this extremity ? I face this long adversity with a greater steadfastness than its persistence.’]



## PART TWO

WHEN I first became assured of remaining with the King and of following him in his marches, it occurred to me that, in order to obtain an approximate notion of this extraordinary man, of the matter and manner of his conversation, and of what would please, interest or distress him, I should write down as exactly as possible everything he might say to me in the conversations which he condescended to have with me, and not even neglect what, at first sight, might seem to me but trifles. For three months, I faithfully and carefully fulfilled this task. Each evening, on returning to my room, I wrote down what I had heard; in this account which I made for myself of his conversation, I used the expressions which His Majesty had himself used, as far as I could recall them, and without troubling whether I repeated either the subjects of conversation or the manner in which they had been treated.

By this, I confess, painful labour, I gained what I had suspected while performing it; and, as I went over his different characteristics from time to time, I began to appreciate somewhat the taste and tone of this great man, and to have less fear of embarrassment in my conversations with him.

Now that I have, up to a certain point, this knowledge which I desired of the crowned philosopher, and now that our frequent and rapid journeyings will sometimes make my audiences and conversations shorter and seldomer than they were in the first months, I will follow a somewhat different method from that observed by me up to the present, not forcing myself to the painful trouble of transcribing wholly, with as much exactness as I have hitherto used, often rather long conversations.

Generally, I will only give a *précis* or the substance of subsequent conversations, unless particular circumstances oblige me to return to my first method. Finally, in permitting myself more reflections than I have ventured to present hitherto, I shall be careful to report also the judgments which I heard pronounced on the King and his operations by the more enlightened of his suite and of his army. I will always indicate the source of what I put forward, as also what I say on my own account of my chief, and, in this last respect, I ask the indulgence of those who will perhaps read me.

We left this pitiful Schmirnitz where so many fine hopes had been conceived. Prince Maurice, following the orders he had received, started at midnight with 10 battalions and 30 squadrons, to march to and occupy the Netztawa camp with General Wedell's corps which he was to meet on the road.

2nd July,  
1758, at  
Breischina  
head-  
quarters.

The King followed at four in the morning with 17 battalions and 33 squadrons through Kosteletz, Hluzov, Teutsch-Premeslowitz, to the heights which are behind Brzesko, where the army camped : headquarters were set up at Brelschina.

After all the arrangements and fatigues of the preceding day, after all those which the King had had on this day, I had little expectation of being called ; I was called, however, at about six o'clock in the evening. I saw immediately from the King's air that he was in a bad humour, and I foresaw an outburst on his part against his poor engineers, whom he was not in the habit of sparing : I was not deceived.

“ You see, my friend, how little we can count on the affairs of this life, and how little we succeed with what seem the best laid schemes. When I arrived at Schmirnitz, I hoped to take Olmütz, and to follow the plan I spoke to you about. Fate has decided otherwise, perhaps to throw us into still greater embarrassments. I am going to redouble my efforts in order to repair the misfortune which my poltroons have brought upon me. If nothing goes wrong, you will see that I have done the best that could be done in my present position. My enemies imagined, when they saw that I was marching off, that I should return through Silesia, and they rejoiced at the harassing rear-guard actions which they would force on me. These fine gentlemen did not have the least suspicion that I would march to Königgrätz, and that Bohemia would

become the theatre of war, if the immense chapter of accidents does not go against me.”

Up to the present, all was well, but the outbursts were not long in following.

“ You must agree that these people make life very bitter for me, and that my engineers, who are true turkey-cocks, add not a little to that bitterness with the stupid blunders they have made. From their Tafelberg, which I call their Mount Poltroon, they opened the trenches, and they laughed to the skies because the enemy had not noticed their work, which was carried on at 1800 paces from the fortress. And when, from the *Wasserfort*, they were fired on by a cannon that enfiladed their works, my Doctor Poltroons, instead of putting an end to the mischief which this cannon was doing us, discoursed laboriously on the difference between oblique and enfilading fire, and argued more laboriously still that the fire from the fort was of the first kind; and thus, by their ineptitude, caused me to lose a large number of brave men; they will have to pay for it. I have written to Marshal Keith to tell these biped, featherless animals that instead of civic or mural crowns,<sup>1</sup> I should send them a fool’s cap (*bonnet d’âne*—ass’s cap), even if it should cost me the ears of the best of my mules. To-morrow, I shall see Mr. Poltroon-Balbi, and I shall dress him down nicely.”

<sup>1</sup> A slight historical licence, civic crown not being analogous to the subject. The Romans only gave it to those who, in a battle, had saved the life of a citizen, and here a siege was in question.



All this was not pleasant, and I imagined in advance the discomfiture of the chief of engineers, who, since the taking of Schweidnitz, had been called my dear, my clever Balbichon. How times change !

The King marched to Mährisch-Trübau, where he pitched his camp, the right on the height of Porstendorf and the left towards Undangs. Marshal Keith, who had marched through Littau and Müglitz, arrived with the chief of engineers. Scarcely had M. de Balbi arrived when he had orders to go and see His Majesty. He was announced, and, after having waited a good hour in the ante-chamber, the King came up to him, face inflamed, and, in the most threatening tone, said to him all the harshest imaginable things ; this cruel audience lasted almost an hour. The good colonel called on me in my quarters, which were next the King's. I saw immediately from his air that he had had to suffer a dreadful outburst, and I commiserated with him with all my soul.

' It is not possible, sir, to imagine all the horrid things he said to me, and I do not know where the deuce he picks up his expressions, each of which is more fiendish than the rest. How, I beg you, can he expect the impossible ! The fortress, at the beginning, was only invested on one side. The immense works which it was necessary to carry out were not protected ; we often lacked munitions ; the besieged were one-third more numerous than we, and all this is so true, sir, that our able

3rd July,  
at Mährisch-  
Trübau  
head-  
quarters.

general Fouqué said that this siege seemed like the performance of an opera in which it was necessary for the imagination to work with all its might in order to get used to so many paradoxes.'

'Be easy in your mind, my dear Colonel; the King, who was not able to master the first violent moment, and who rarely ever is able to do so, will become calmer in a day or so, and will perceive that you have not made all the mistakes that he imagines. You will see that he will keep you in his good graces.'<sup>1</sup>

'Ah, sir, how little you yet know of the Father Prior. He never changes his mind, especially if, in changing it, he would have to reveal his weak side: he change his mind, and confess that something failed because of his fault! A cannon, when fired, will go forward sooner, instead of backward. No, sir, you do not know him, and may heaven grant that you never know him by your own experience. You will render this man a thousand services, but, should you have the misfortune to be found wanting for one moment, especially in things in which he may imagine that his self-esteem has been damaged, your thousand services can go to the devil for ever. Eh, I could quote you innumerable examples of what I am telling you, sir.'<sup>2</sup> But I must depart; I have been

<sup>1</sup> The King, learning that Colonel de Balbi was approaching his end, sent to inquire whether the sick man could still leave his room. Being told yes, His Majesty sent for him, and spoke kindly to him as if nothing had happened.

<sup>2</sup> Captain de Marwitz, aide-de-camp of the King, told me practically the same thing on the first days of my arrival at Grüssau. I rejected

ordered to do so, and probably never to come back again. Remember me.'

The dejection of the worthy colonel caused me infinite distress, as also all those who knew his merits.

I was called in the evening rather late and for a moment only.

"I have seen," he said to me immediately, "my Anti-Poliorcète, and I dressed him down in a way he will not boast of. Have you seen him?"

'Yes, Sire.'

"Well, what did he say to you?"

'That he was in despair at having displeased Your Majesty, and that he would only survive in sorrow the disgrace with which Your Majesty has loaded him.'

"Enough. These gentlemen must be taught from time to time not to treat things lightly, and especially things of such great importance as a bungled siege. You do not yet know very well those whom I have to lead, my dear sir. I am sometimes compelled to be angry with them and often against my will, but if I were to soften, if, from time to time and as the need arises, I did not ride the high horse, you would soon see me tumbled over. Balbi is not the only one who has played the

with horror what he told me, which he did in order to warn me against the King. He even went so far as to say to me: 'Sir, for the slightest fault you may commit with him, he will send you away after thirty years of service, and even without any fault on your side. He will be harsh enough to send you away, when he feels that he ought to reward all the constraint in which you will have passed your finest years. That is the man, sir, as he is.'

fool. My good Zieten has also : in order to wait for a few confounded waggons which had turned back at Troppau, and which he had ordered to return, he clumsily stopped on the 29th at Neudorf with the convoy. If, without troubling about these waggons, he had continued his march, the convoy would have arrived safely at the siege, for Siskovich's corps would have come too late to attack it,<sup>1</sup> and, once my convoy had arrived, in a fortnight at the most, according to Keith's calculation, I should have had the place. Monsieur Daun would have manœuvred in vain to prevent this capture, I should have manœuvred quite as well as he, and we should have beaten him. You see, my friend, on what important affairs hang : ears more or less long, Mount Poltroons, dissertations on the difference between oblique and enfilading fire, a few fatal waggons which retard an essential march, all this leads me here. To-morrow, I shall be better able to talk with you. My poor head is all muddled ; it is not worth a pipe of tobacco to-day."

Everybody who was at headquarters pitied the fate of Colonel de Balbi ; all cried out against the harshness with which the King had treated him, and this in the presence of the lackey who was on duty ; all were agreed, and Marshal Keith, an upright and exceedingly competent judge, also agreed, that the siege had been undertaken too

<sup>1</sup> General Loudon, badly handled on the 28th, would not have chanced a second appearance,



lightly, without sufficient forces; that, if the worthy Balbi were culpable, he was not alone, and that he was so least of all.

I learned on this occasion from a very respectable person a rather singular fact, which, combined with what I had heard from the King himself and of what he thought about dreams, seems to me very probable. This is what this person told me.

‘You must know, sir, that Colonel Balbi owed his first advancement to a dream. Nothing is truer than what I have the honour of telling you. Your hero and mine, who braves heaven and hell, time and eternity, is subject to the impressions which a more or less agitated blood occasions during sleep. He dreamed, then, one night that he had fallen into a river and was on the point of perishing, when of a sudden Colonel Balbi appeared, stretched out his hand, dragged him from the water, and saved him. The colonel, forgotten until that moment, and stationed at Berlin, was immediately summoned to Potsdam, where the King, without speaking of the service he had rendered him, loaded him with caresses, and fed him for a long time afterwards on nectar and ambrosia.<sup>1</sup> That is the fact, word for word, as it was related to me.’

I replied: ‘However elevated they may be, they are what we are: Newton annotating the Apocalypse.’

I went to His Majesty’s quarters at four o’clock.

<sup>1</sup> The same person has told me since, that Count Frederick d’Anhalt, aide-de-camp of the King, owed his misfortune to a dream,

He began with Colonel de Balbi; I thought I remarked that he had some regret for having treated him as he did the day before.

“ I don’t know how it is this Balbi made such a bungle of the siege; he did so well at Schweidnitz. We are very seldom the same from one moment to another, and this is a great misfortune for men and affairs.”

There was no question of Mr. Poltroon, and this gave me a good deal of pleasure.

“ Our great and most eminent Marshal, after some *Ave Marias*,<sup>1</sup> will doubtless go and visit our siege works and my positions at Schmirnitz and Aschmeritz. I seem to see him swelling out like a frog or a woman in labour. Perhaps the marches I have made and shall make will deflate him a little.”

The fatigues of the day, headaches, and more than all else a little colic, as his surgeon told me, forced His Majesty to go to bed, and all the more so because he wished to continue his march at dawn: so I did not have the honour of seeing him on this day.

The King, with Lattorff’s regiment, Retzow’s battalion and the bodyguards, marched to Leutomischl, where he found Prince Maurice. The Margrave Charles remained at the camp of Zwittau with the other troops to await Marshal Keith there.

<sup>1</sup> Which disposed him no doubt to let us make our journey and that of our four thousand waggons quietly, without even sending after them a patrol. It is true that Marshal Keith masked our retreat well. In the night, he doubled the fire of our batteries: the whole of the baggage started at two in the morning in three columns.

5th July,  
at Zwittau  
head-  
quarters.

6th July,  
at Leuto-  
mischl.

During the three days that we remained in this town, the King was occupied in the morning for a few moments in re-reading his verses and correcting them. After dinner, he read me his corrections. The 6th, 7th  
and 8th July.

“Here is an epistle to my sister Amelia *sur le Hasard*<sup>1</sup> (on Chance); it is only a rough outline so far. I will work it up in Boileau’s manner when my head is in a better condition than it is. It is a great matter, chance, and governs the half of this foolish planet on which we dwell. If the creature to whom this castle in which I am lodging belonged were to hear me speak thus of chance, he would cry out: ‘Oh, the unbeliever, how can he hope to have success!’ You do not know who was the master of this castle?”

‘No, Sire.’

“It was Trauttmannsdorff, a good philosopher, without perhaps having read a book of philosophy. When on the point of death, *in periculo mortis*, if you like Latin, he sent for his doctor: ‘Sir,’ he asked him, ‘how long have I yet to live? Speak frankly.’—‘Very little longer, my Lord.’—‘Good, that is sufficient. Good evening, Mr. Doctor.’ Trauttmannsdorff sent for all his people, put all his affairs in order, wrote a circular letter to all his peasants, asking them whether they had any

<sup>1</sup> Beginning:

Je pensais bien souvent encore jeune et novice,  
Etranger dans le monde, étranger dans le vice.

[‘I used often to think when still young and green, a stranger to the world and strange to vice.’]

complaint against him and whether he had done them wrong of any kind, which he was ready to make good, finally, married his daughter to Count de Wallenstein, and went to sleep in the bosom of philosophy. If you see me die, my friend, you will see that I shall depart quietly and shall finish in the same way. If you had not made me feel the other day, sir, that we should respect that which the greater number reveres, I would whisper in your ear the reason why I look upon death as a simple sleep, which delivers us from all our pains, but sh ! not a word."

'I believe, like Your Majesty, that death puts an end to the pains and cares of this life; I also believe, like Your Majesty, that death is a sleep, but the awakening, Sire——'

"But I am not in the humour to argue. Let us leave the sleep and the awakening in peace, and let us read *Athalie*, but on the old condition of the pinch of snuff."

He read or rather declaimed the first two scenes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> At the lines in the first scene beginning

Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots.

['He who bridles the fury of the waves.'] "There is nothing so simple," he said, "as there is nothing so sublime, finer and more eloquent than what Joad says in this same scene :

Et quel temps fut jadis si fertile en miracles,  
Quand Dieu, par plus d'effets, montra-t-il son pouvoir?  
Auras-tu donc toujours des yeux pour ne point voir,  
Peuple ingrat?"

['And what time was ever so fertile in miracles, or when did God show his power by greater evidence? Will you then always have eyes without seeing, ungrateful people?'] He declaimed Joad's whole speech by heart.



When he came to the passage of the second scene, first act, in which Joad speaks of the Queen, instead of reading :

Livre en mes faibles mains ses puissans ennemis,  
 Confonds dans ses conseils une reine cruelle,  
 Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur Mathan et sur elle  
 Répandre cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur,  
 De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur.  
 L'heure me presse, adieu, <sup>1</sup>

he declaimed :

Livre en mes faibles mains *mes* puissans ennemis,  
 Confonds dans ses conseils une reine cruelle,  
 Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur *Kaunitz* et sur elle  
 Répandre cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur,  
 De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur.  
 L'heure me presse, adieu. <sup>2</sup>

At this *heure me presse*, he rose, I rose.

“Adieu, I remember that I have a word to write to Keith. Another time, I will read you the continuation of this sublime play.”

Thus finished one of my audiences during the stay at Leutomischl.

On the last day, I was called very early. The King seemed sad. After a moment's silence, he broke it, and spoke to me again of his brother whom he had just lost.

“My friend, the death of my brother is constantly

<sup>1</sup> [‘Deliver into my weak hands his powerful enemies ; confound in her counsels a cruel queen ; deign, deign, O God, to pour out on Mathan and on her that spirit of recklessness and error, which is the fatal fore-runner of the fall of kings. But time presses, farewell.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘Deliver into my weak hands *my* powerful enemies ; confound in her counsels a cruel queen ; deign, deign, O God, to pour out on *Kaunitz* . . .,’ etc.] He often parodied these lines in this way in many circumstances.

on my mind. I busy myself in vain ; his image is ever present to my soul, and makes hell in it. I regret his kind heart, his true attachment to the country and to me, and his end, my dear sir, in the prime of life ! If only diabolical creatures had not embittered him against me, if he had not been so easily persuaded and had not listened to so many treacherous speeches, if he had opened his heart to me, who knows but what he might yet be living, and, if he had died, as everything dies, I should at least have the pleasant satisfaction of knowing that he had nothing against me, and he himself would not have carried off to the tomb ideas that were perhaps disagreeable. My friend, my friend, those people who sow disunion in families, whoever they may be, are to be condemned ! They are monsters who should be choked. The hatred they cause between relations whom everything tends to bring together are, unfortunately, the most stubborn and most violent hatreds of all.”

At the end of this speech, he seemed pensive, and, after a rather long pause, he spoke to me of a plan which I certainly did not suspect.

“ One of the reasons which will make me always regret a brother so tenderly and so sincerely loved, I protest to you, is that his death has upset a plan that was dear to me, that of retiring, leaving the reins of government in my brother’s hand, and of leading a quiet life ; yes, my friend, of retiring, not, like a catholic, to go and live in modern Rome, nor to go and make myself abbé of Saint-Germain

des Prés, but, like a wise man, to put an interval between all my worries and death. I have perhaps still in my body ten to twelve years of life, that is all. Why, if all this finishes, should I not taste a little rest in the bosom of the society of a small number of enlightened friends whom I would choose? That is my plan which this heart-rending death has upset. In conscience, I cannot carry it out during the minority of my successor.”

And he went on to speak of all the evils which minorities had caused in France.

“I love my people too much, God is my witness, to expose them to suffer more even than they are suffering at present. You see, my friend, by all that I have just told you of the leanings of my heart and of my taste for retirement, that I have very few fine days to hope for, and if I am ever to see Berlin again, what sorrow shall I not feel there! I shall no longer find there the tenderest of mothers; you cannot conceive how I loved her. Ah! what would have been the feelings of so beloved a mother if she had seen all my reverses, she who loved me more than can be imagined! I shall no more see a brother and many friends whom I have lost; I shall only see sorrowful people who have sacrificed themselves for me.

“And if I did not sacrifice myself for them, I should be a monster of ingratitude.”

This conversation ended there, and it seemed very singular to me. You will perhaps make here the reflections which presented themselves at the

time to my mind : that sometimes the King spoke with a kind of enthusiasm, and acted afterwards with an enthusiasm very different from the first. I had already made this reflection in comparing what he often did me the honour of saying to me with his compositions that he read to me. These discrepancies were rather the consequence of this enthusiasm than of a lack of sincerity.

In dismissing me, he told me that we should set out on the morrow at a very early hour, that for several days it might well happen that he would not see me, since he foresaw that he would have a great deal of work to do on his marches, and that, when he did see me, I was to expect accounts of rearguard marches, of detachments cut up, and perhaps more disagreeable news than this even.

9th July, at  
Hruschowa.

The whole army set out on its march in two columns; Prince Maurice, with the first, went by way of Sedlisch, Hermanitz, Wratkowich, and camped near Tissowa. The King marched with the second column by way of Nedoschin and Czerckwitz to the camp of Hruschowa or Hraschowa, the left resting on this village, where the headquarters were, the right on Buczine; and the Margrave Charles remained with 10 battalions and 30 squadrons on the heights of Leutomischl, to await there the arrival of Marshal Keith with his three divisions. I was not called on this or the following day.

10th July, at  
Holitz.

His Majesty marched on this day in two columns to Holitz and encamped, the right being on the



mountain which is behind Alt-Holitz, and the left on the Capellenberg. Headquarters were at Holitz. These two marches were very difficult, both on account of the road taken and of the extreme heat, by which the men were much harassed.

We marched on this day by Rzetize and by the embankment of Bohumielitz towards Wisoka; <sup>11th July, at Lhotka or Illota.</sup> the right of the army was at Lhotka or Illota, and the left at Trzebetsch, headquarters being in this last place. I did not see the King, who, during these three days, went to bed very early, being always up at two o'clock in the morning.

I was called at five o'clock.

“Ah, good day, my dear sir. What have you being doing since our Leutomischl? Would you say that the marches we are making are cheering things? Since the last time I saw you, I have never been off my beast; yesterday morning, I sent Prince Maurice with the first column to Swinary, near Königgrätz. He threw a bridge over the Adler, and drove off the Croats on the other side. I repaired the bridge over the Elbe near Wisoka which the enemy had broken, with the idea of investing the town on the other side and of storming the Croatenberg this morning; but all my trouble went for nothing, because, when day broke, we found nobody at home. General Buccow and M. de Janus, who were defending the town and the Croatenberg with 4000 men, decided to retire; they broke the bridges over the Elbe,

<sup>12th July, at Rokitna.</sup>

and, in God's hands, they took the road to Chlumetz.

“This morning, at seven o'clock, learning on the march that Retzow was being attacked by Generals Loudon, Saint-Ignon and Siskovich with a considerable body of men, I hurried up to support him, and as the enemy retired from Holitz, I advanced no farther, and pitched my camp here on the left of this village. That, sir, in two words, is a summary of our great doings. Since you are present at our fine adventures, it is fair that you should be informed of them, and, on this, I wish you good evening, for I am so tired that I can scarcely keep my poor eyes open. Until to-morrow at three o'clock.”

13th July,  
still at  
Rokitna.

I went to His Majesty's quarters at the hour mentioned.

“You see in me,” he said, “a man who has not closed his eyes the whole night long; my blood, being too agitated, had driven off that healthy sleep of which I had great need. What would you, my gentleman must go on willy-nilly. I believe I have a touch of ill-temper; do you think me an ill-tempered man?”

‘If you are so sometimes, Sire, it would not be astonishing, seeing that you have so many worries of all kinds.’

“Ah, sir, that is a reply which is just a little evasive. I do not ask you what you are telling me, but whether you think that I am easily put out of temper.”

I did not wish to reply, but he pressed me so much and in so many ways, that I said :

‘ Yes, Sire.’

“ And how, sir, have you remarked that I am easily put out of temper ? ”

Seeing that he took a slight pleasure in embarrassing me and that he forced me to explain myself, I said quite simply :

‘ Sire, I have remarked this slight ill-humour, either when a report is brought in to you which you were not expecting, or which runs counter to your own notions, or when your servants, out of fear, do not execute your orders exactly as you gave them.’

“ *Bene, bene, dignus est intrare in nostro corpore,* who spoke so *bene*. Now, sir, you are speaking roundly, and that is what pleases me. Yes, I am often ill-humoured, I must acknowledge, but also, what a number of reasons I have for my ill-humour ! Those reports you speak of which annoy me are reports in which there is often neither rhyme nor reason ; they contain what has been imagined rather than what has been actually seen ; and my people are sometimes so heavy-witted and so inept that often I am obliged to spell to them what they must know and remember. Do not think, my friend, that I give way to this ill-humour, without making reflections that will moderate it and render its return less frequent. In this respect, I do what I do even in times of peace, when I see or learn displeasing things. I

put in operation all the power of reflection I possess in order to avoid that first moment, which is very violent with me, and, so long as the violence of this first moment lasts, I refrain carefully from deciding on what I have seen or heard to stir up my bile. In spite of my cares, I do not always avoid this first moment, and then my gentleman sometimes commits follies, and my gentleman bites his fingers for it. Some one has said—I don't know who—that it is folly to speak of our faults, but I say that it is folly not to acknowledge our faults when friends whom we have begged to enlighten us about them inform us of them. You see that I am frank; I shall be the same with regard to the few good qualities I may have; I shall acknowledge them without trying to humiliate any one, and I shall acknowledge especially the good qualities of others, to which it is always a pleasure to me to do justice, as I shall always take pleasure in doing justice to the fools, bigots, and imbeciles of all kinds with which this good universe abounds.

“After all the fine things which I have just said to you and which I leave to your reflections, I wish you a good night. I will myself in a few moments try to get some sleep. I hope it will treat me better than it did last night; I have great need of it, for I have to be on horseback at break of day to-morrow, and, reinforced by three battalions, by all the dragoons and hussars of Marshal Keith's corps, I shall have the honour of forming



the rear-guard of all, and consequently of yourself. Until to-morrow then, in the suburbs of Königgrätz.”<sup>1</sup>

This conversation was singular. The King had tried several times to put me to confusion, but in this conversation he tried more particularly to do so in making me admit his faults, in acknowledging them himself, in persuading me that my sincerity interested him, and that I should never have anything to fear in speaking to him frankly when he required it of me. I could not decide at the moment whether the King imagined what he told me, or whether he really thought everything that formed the subject of this conversation, but I saw, as I had already seen several times, that His Majesty wished to give me of himself in all possible respects the most favourable idea. My remark gave me pleasure. Everything inclined me to profit by it both for His Majesty's sake and for my own. On every occasion that presented itself,<sup>2</sup> I referred to the greatness and strength of soul, to those virtues which make heroes and wise men. I showed him my astonishment that, in such critical circumstances of his existence, he pre-

<sup>1</sup> During this stay, I had a stroke of luck. Coming away from the King's quarters, I saw a detachment of cavalry surround my lodging. They carried off my servant, who had stolen from his old master, a captain of cavalry. This rogue, on being examined, confessed that during the night he had intended to pass over to the Austrians with all my baggage, and to steal what he could in money. He was hanged while we were marching to Rusek, although His Majesty had not signed the sentence of death.

<sup>2</sup> I shall have occasion in what follows to quote many incidents that confirm what I state.

served his good humour and that equanimity which marked true greatness.

The King had inveighed too much, and he always inveighed too much on every occasion, against those detestable flatterers, 'the most fatal gift,' for me to think of following their example, even if by temperament I were not preserved from such treachery. My sole aim in praising him was to present him to himself as Europe and the wise saw him.

"Voltaire," he said to me, "in praising me made me double my efforts to deserve his praise, and this is the way in which I must be taken. If they had sought to raise me in my youth rather than humiliate me, believe me, my dear sir, that I should be worthier than I am; but they neglected my education; I had to undertake it myself, and I have only accomplished it in part, and always with some remembrance of the humiliations I had suffered."

14th July,  
1758, at  
Königgrätz.

We marched on this day without being troubled by the enemy. The King crossed the Adler at Königgrätz, and the whole army pitched its camp anew; the right of the first line rested on Rusek; the centre had before it the Croatenberg; the left extended beyond the farm of the Canonici and stretched towards Swinarka; the greater part of the cavalry encamped on the right of the two lines. The right of the second line rested on Piletitz, and the left on Slatina. His Majesty established himself in the suburbs of Königgrätz.

That was our position as the King showed it to me on the map when I went to his quarters at five o'clock in the evening. He even had the kindness to rough out on paper for me this encampment of all his troops.

During the two days that His Majesty remained at Königgrätz, he spoke to me of his military operations, and continued the reading of *Athalie*, which, as I have said, was interrupted when he was at the lines of the second scene beginning, *l'heure me presse, adieu*.

“I detached Fouqué with 19 battalions and 25 squadrons to guard the communication between Glatz and Metau. He will take up his position,” he said to me, “in such a way that the enemy troops will not be able to attack the heavy artillery which I am sending back to Glatz or the provisions which I must draw from there for the subsistence of my army. I have just learned that General Loudon has marched to Opotschna, and that he has left a detachment at Hohenbrück to embarrass our communications with Glatz, but this gentleman will gain nothing for his trouble. The great Marshal is throwing bridges across the Elbe at Pardubitz, doubtless in order to pass his army over. You will see him encamp, I think, between Urbanice and Chlum. See these places on my map.”

On this first day, the King being very fatigued went to bed at a very early hour. He asked me whether I lodged in the town; I told him that this was so, and related to him what had happened

to me with Prince Maurice on the subject of my quarters.<sup>1</sup> He laughed a good deal over this account, which I had to repeat to him.

“However, be very careful to wash your face, since he kissed you so heartily with his cancer on his mouth. He is a very singular man is our good Maurice, but he is as brave as his sword. There is no better holiday for him than a fight. He always sees everything in a rosy hue. What a man he would have become if his education had not been neglected; but he is as he is, and will remain as nature made him.”

15th July.

In the evening at four o'clock, His Majesty recommenced the reading of *Athalie*. Before beginning, he declaimed, laughing :

Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur *Kaunitz* et sur elle  
Répandre cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur,  
De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur.

Having fervently made this prayer: “My friend, we will go on, and do not forget the pinch of snuff.”

<sup>1</sup> Prince Maurice had assigned me to the Jesuit convent. This convent, being full of wounded and infection, did not suit me, and I begged the Prince through his aide-de-camp, Colonel de Kleist, to have me quartered elsewhere. ‘It cannot be done,’ he said. ‘A man should not be so fastidious; I often lodge myself in similar places where it stinks like the devil. Who is the gentleman?’ he said.

‘He is, my Lord, a Swiss, and there he is passing; he is with His Majesty, and is his companion.’

‘What is his religion?’

‘Protestant, my Lord.’

‘Protestant!’ And the Prince came up behind me and embraced me for a good moment: ‘God be praised that the King has at last an honest man about him and a Protestant. Come, Kleist, a good billet, the best billet in the town. Come and dine with me.’



At the sixth scene of the first act where the chorus chants :

Tout l'univers est plein de sa magnificence,  
 Qu'on l'adore ce Dieu, qu'on l'invoque à jamais !  
 Son empire a des temps précédé la naissance,  
 Chantons, publions ses bienfaits.  
 Le jour annonce au jour sa gloire et sa puissance :  
 Tout l'univers est plein de sa magnificence :  
 Chantons, publions ses bienfaits.<sup>1</sup>

“That is fine, my friend, that is fine, but you must agree that Rousseau has painted still better than Racine :

De sa puissance immortelle  
 Tout parle, tout nous instruit,  
 Le jour au jour la révèle,  
 La nuit l'annonce à la nuit.<sup>2</sup>

“If Rousseau, like Racine, has not that freshness of colour in his pathetic paintings, he has certainly more strength than the latter when it comes to presenting great images. You will pardon me these slight remarks, sir, and these points of comparison which I present and shall present to you. We shall gain by it, both of us, in making them. This has always been, as I have told you, my own method, and it has served me not a little in forming my taste.

“If you will permit me one more remark, I will say that Rousseau, with all the pomp and all the

<sup>1</sup> [‘The whole universe is full of his magnificence: let this God be worshipped, let him be praised for ever! His empire preceded the birth of time; let us sing, let us proclaim his benefits. Day announces to day his glory and his power, the whole universe is full of his magnificence: let us sing, let us proclaim his benefits.’]

<sup>2</sup> [‘Everything speaks to us, everything tells of his immortal power; day reveals it to day, night announces it to night.’]

strength possible in his verses, has not been able to combine, as Racine has done, those passages of so happy a pathetic painting with lofty and terrible descriptions. This chorus which I am reading to you will always be a proof of this for those who know how to read."

When the King came to the dream of *Athalie*, scene 5, act ii. :

Tel qu'un songe effrayant l'a peint à ma pensée,<sup>1</sup>

he stopped a moment, and asked me whether I recalled the dream he had at Schmirnitz about his father, his brother and his sister, the Margravine of Baireuth. I said yes. He then said :

Un songe (me devrais-je inquiéter d'un songe ?).<sup>2</sup>

"She<sup>3</sup> is right ; they lie, all of them."

In the same scene, where Abner says to Mathan :<sup>4</sup>

Hé quoi, Mathan ! d'un prêtre est-ce là le langage ?  
Moi, nourri dans la guerre aux horreurs du carnage,  
Des vengeances des rois ministre rigoureux,  
C'est moi qui prête ici ma voix aux malheureux !<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ['Such as a frightful dream has painted him in my mind.']

<sup>2</sup> ['A dream (should I be uneasy about a dream?).']

<sup>3</sup> *Athalie*.

<sup>4</sup> 'When Joad says to Joas, act iv. scene 3 :

Dans l'infidèle sang baignez-vous sans horreur,  
Frappez et Tyriens et même Israélites

[ 'Bathe in infidel blood without horror, strike both Tyrians and Israelites even ' ] should not have been said to him what Abner says here to Mathan :

Hé quoi, Mathan ! d'un prêtre est-ce là le langage ?'

I said to the King, who approved my remark and cried, "Bravo !"

<sup>5</sup> ['Ho there, Mathan, is this the language of a priest? I who am bred to war and the horrors of slaughter, the harsh minister of the vengeance of kings,—must it be I who raise my voice here for the unfortunate !']

“ Thus think, my dear sir, all upright warriors, and thus thinks this rabble of priests, who nearly always cheat both God, kings and men. These rogues are always ready to sacrifice everything to their interests. They are the detestable flatterers who, having the ear of kings, sow the edges of precipices with flowers, and hide the sad truth from their eyes.”

He quoted from memory what Mathan says to Nabal : <sup>1</sup>

Ami, peux-tu penser——

“ All that Mathan says here is written in letters of fire in convents and in the heads of priests.”

‘ There must, however, Sire, be many exceptions to make. All priests are not Mathans.’

“ No, doubtless they are not. The world would be too unfortunate, if that were so. What I say to you about these b—— is for the most part true ; but let us leave them, they make me angry.

Que du Seigneur la voix se fasse entendre,  
Et qu'à nos cœurs son oracle divin  
Soit ce qu'à l'herbe tendre  
Est au printemps, la fraîcheur du matin.<sup>2</sup>

“ This does not approach these fine lines of an ode of Rousseau which I recall :

Qu'aux accens de ma voix, la terre se réveille,  
Rois, soyez attentifs, peuples, ouvrez l'oreille,  
Que l'univers se taise et m'écoute parler !

<sup>1</sup> Act iii. scene 3.

<sup>2</sup> Act iii. scene 7, chorus. [‘ Let the voice of the Lord be heard, and let his divine message be to our hearts what the freshness of the morning in spring is to the tender grasses.’]

Mes chants vont seconder les accords de ma lyre,  
L'Esprit saint me pénètre, il m'échauffe, il m'inspire  
Les grandes vérités que je vais révéler.<sup>1</sup>

“Do you know, sir, any lines more majestic than these ?”

The King made several other observations on the art and prudence in the conduct of Joad, when he says to Josabeth : <sup>2</sup>

Il n'est pas temps, princesse——

“This *dénouement* which is so simple, so natural and so striking !

Paraissez, cher enfant, digne sang de nos rois.” <sup>3</sup>

But I pass them over in silence to come to his judgment on the play as a whole :

“Racine, in this perfect tragedy, has developed by a most simple and well-conducted action a truth which, by its nature, did not appear capable of the great interest he has given to it. The part of *Athalie* is a strong one, Josabeth's, very weak ; Abner is often useless. Joad speaks and acts to the life like a priest living in a theocracy. Mathan makes known his infamous wickedness to the spectator more by his words than by his actions. Little Joas is touching and really affecting. Finally, as regards style and action, *Athalie* is inimitable.”

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Let the earth awaken at the sound of my voice ; kings, be heedful, peoples, give ear ; let the universe be silent and hear me speak ! My voice will swell the strains of my lyre ; the holy Spirit penetrates me, inflames me, and inspires in me the great truths I am about to reveal. ’]

<sup>2</sup> Act v. scene 2.

<sup>3</sup> Act v. scene 5. [‘ Appear, dear child, worthy blood of our kings. ’]



The King rose and ended his remarks by declaiming :

Apprenez, roi des juifs, et n'oubliez jamais  
Que les rois dans le ciel ont un juge sévère,  
L'innocence un vengeur, et l'orphelin un père.<sup>1</sup>

“ *Hoc non est verum !* ”

‘ *Verum, Sire !* ’

“ Now, my dear sir, I will tell you the part you have to play for a few days, and that is to remain quietly at Königgrätz, and to await me there until I return. I cannot tell you when that will be. At a guess, my excursion may take three or four days. I propose to dislodge M. de Loudon from Opotschna ; he clings there, and can hamper my convoys very much from that point. I start to-morrow at two o'clock in the morning ; I shall take with me Zieten's hussars, Normann's dragoons, three regiments and a battalion of infantry. I shall pass through—and look at my map—Bleschno, Nepasitz, Jenkowitz and Miestetz, towards Mokrey, elegant names indeed, you will agree. Fouqué will appear on the other side of Opotschna. Good-bye and keep well. Do not kiss either Prince Maurice or the fair ladies, if you see any. Pray for an old soldier who is doing all he can, and who does not spare either himself or the charger that carries him. Good evening, good evening.”

During this absence of the King, whom I suffered From the 16th July to the 23rd. to see in his present position, undergoing extreme

<sup>1</sup> [‘ Learn, king of the Jews, and never forget that kings have in heaven a severe judge, innocence an avenger, and the orphan a father. ’]

fatigues, I saw a great deal of the worthy Sir Andrew Mitchell, with whom I talked each day of the King and all that concerned him. I communicated to him several of the notebooks of my conversations with this great man. He assured me honestly that he thought that, if I continued them, I should have the King wholly, which was the expression he used. He asked me for a copy of several. As he was, like me, strongly attached to the King and zealous in all that might have the slightest relation to him, I did not hesitate to give him several of the conversations of the first days of my arrival, that in which Captain Guichard was dressed up in the accoutrements of a grenadier, and two of our conversations at Schmirnitz.

‘The more I read this,’ he said to me one day, ‘the more I see our man and our dear Father Prior.’

Every day, we rode out to the camp, the King being the continual subject of our talk.

I sometimes saw, but not as often as I should have desired, Marshal Keith, who suffered much from asthma. In speaking with him of the crossing of the Morava and of the march of Marshal Daun, ‘I don’t know,’ he said, ‘what our gentlemen want. They have treated this fine march as a mere nothing. For my part, when I heard of it, I opened my eyes wide, I confess to you.’

As I had an opportunity of becoming acquainted

with the story of this worthy Marshal, the reader will perhaps not be displeased to learn the following details.

Marshal Keith, declared a rebel in his own country because he as well as his brother, the Earl Marischal, had embraced the cause of the Pretender, left his country, Scotland, after the defeat of this unfortunate prince, and entered the service of Spain; thence he passed to Russia, which country secured his services. He served under Marshal Münnich in the war of Russia against Turkey, and, at the taking of Oczakow, he received a wound in the knee, which was only cured by the waters of Barèges. On arriving in the Pyrenees, his post-chaise broke down. 'It is not surprising,' said the Marshal to the postillion, 'that a carriage should break down, when it has done a journey of two thousand leagues.'—'Eh! where the deuce do you come from then?' said the postillion.—'From the moon.'

Marshal Keith, cured of his wound, afterwards served in the war of Russia against the Swedes, and commanded in chief, if I am not mistaken, at the battle of Wilmanstrand, where the Swedes were utterly defeated. It was at Abo, capital of Finland, that he found Mademoiselle Eve Mertenis, his mistress, who, they say, led the Marshal something of a life.

The Empress Elizabeth rewarded the Marshal by a present of considerable estates, but this gift, fine as it was, did not shelter him from vexations

which he suffered in other respects. These vexations decided him to leave Russia, and to pass the remainder of his days in Venice, in the bosom of liberty and repose. The Empress upset this project of M. de Keith's by taking away from him the estates which she had bestowed on him. Then, seeing himself deprived of all his resources, and being without fortune of any kind, he accepted the offers made to him by the King of Prussia to take him into his service as Marshal, to nominate him governor of Berlin, and to decorate him with the order of the black eagle.

'This is worth quite as much,' he said, 'as the finest estates possible in a country which is still very wild.'

War having been declared in 1756 on the house of Austria, Marshal Keith commanded the army which invaded Bohemia, while the King held the Saxon army shut up in the camp of Struppen. The intrigues of the late Lieutenant-General de Winterfeldt, who sought to supplant the Marshal, in the hope of obtaining the command, induced the King to go over into Bohemia, where he won in person the battle of Lobositz, but, when the monarch was obliged to return to Saxony, Marshal Keith resumed the command, and led the army back to its winter quarters. In 1757, the Marshal commanded that part of the army which invested Prague on this side of the Moldau. He was not present at the battle of the 6th of May, but as he could easily distinguish from a height the move-



ments of the two armies, he saw clearly that the battle was won.

‘It is won, it is won,’ he said to M. de Cocceji, his aide-de-camp, ‘let us go and dine.’

The Marshal had scarcely sat down to table when he learned the death of Marshal de Schwerin, with whom he was on terms of very affectionate friendship, which is always very rare between rivals. He rose immediately, and shut himself up in his cabinet. An hour afterwards, he sent for his aide-de-camp, and talked to him of the great sorrow this death had caused him.

‘He is no more. The great Schwerin is no more. Born with all the talents which make great men, having obtained all the honours and dignities which a private individual can strive for, he has just died on the field of honour, after having covered himself with immortal glory. So great a happiness is not reserved for me.’<sup>1</sup>

Towards the end of the year, Marshal Keith was at the battle of Rossbach, and afterwards commanded a small corps, with which he invaded Bohemia. The aim of this incursion of the Marshal’s was to give the enemy fears for Prague, and to draw off from Lusatia several flying corps which might have stopped the march of the King, then on the way with an army to Silesia, where he won the famous battle of Leuthen.

It was at Königgrätz that I learned to know

<sup>1</sup> This prediction was falsified by his death at the battle of Hochkirchen.

Captain de Cocceji more particularly, and it was he who was so kind as to impart to me some of these details about Marshal Keith, whose aide-de-camp he was, as I have said, and whose entire confidence he held. He was well worthy of this on account of his abilities and his character, as he had also proved worthy of that of the King, who looked upon him as a distinguished subject, and one likely, he said to me, to play a great part.

“If the critical spirit to which he is rather often given does not govern him too much and carry him too far, he will be a subject like few I have known. His father, my chancellor, was a man of great abilities. I always esteemed him very much, and his memory is still dear to me. This critical spirit pains me in a young man, especially when I am well disposed towards him.”

I report here His Majesty's judgment faithfully.

The King came back on this day from Opotschna to the suburbs of Königgrätz, and sent for me at four o'clock. Before giving an account of my audience, I will say a word or two of what happened in the morning, immediately after the return of His Majesty.

After the affair of the convoy of Olmütz, the light troops of the enemy had so effectively occupied all the passes that, since then, no letter pouch had been able to get through. At last, the arrival was announced to the King of a courier with not one pouch, but several. He ordered them to be brought without exception to his chamber. There,

This 23rd  
July.

in the presence of Councillor Eichel, the King, greedy for news, broke open without distinction the first letters that came to his hand, those addressed to the Princes, to Sir Andrew Mitchell, and one of mine, and he read them all. He would have gone on like this, if the Councillor had not said to him : ‘ But, Sire, these letters are not for Your Majesty. Here is the packet which concerns you.’

“ Give it to me quickly ; send on promptly those I have opened, and make my apologies.”

This is what I learned from the Councillor when, on receiving my letters, I saw one opened and all crumpled. ‘ There was never anything more comical,’ he went on, ‘ than this opening of letters. I have never seen the King so eager or so excited as he was at the time of the arrival of the packets. In his impatience, he broke open the letters so impetuously and tore several of them so much that I don’t know how I am to explain it away.’

Among the three I received was the one opened and read by His Majesty, in which I found this passage, which gave me no little anxiety on account of what it contained and of the uncertainty and anguish I was in as to how His Majesty had taken it :

‘ It is very surprising, dear friend,’ wrote to me a Swiss officer in the service of Piedmont, ‘ that, being summoned by the King of Prussia, you have not said to me the slightest word about your good fortune in being attached to this great man. I like to think that you have written to me, knowing that I am so particularly interested in your happiness, and that, unfortunately,



your letter has gone astray or been intercepted, as frequently happens in time of war. Whatever may be the reason of this silence, which I beg you to explain immediately, and for which I do not hold you responsible, I wish you all the good fortune possible with your hero, who is also mine. I wish you health, which is better than heroes and all they can give. I am very certain, by the knowledge I have of the honesty of your character and of your principles, that it will not be your fault if you do not succeed with him; it will be his fault entirely. The Solomon of the North is said to be difficult in society, demanding much, humiliating still more those who have the honour of living with him when he may have against them some cause for displeasure, suspicious of everything and very easily so, and easily tiring of any one when he should be rewarding his services. Perhaps if, like the Solomon of Judea, he had in his palace the third of the beautiful women which the Jewish king had, all this tittle-tattle would not run about. Women, when you do not exhaust yourself too much with them—against which, by the by, nature is a sufficient safeguard—are more fitted than literature and philosophy and the sublime vanity of metaphysics, which are only cultivated out of vanity, to soften a man's humour and character, make him more affable in society, not demanding too much, and to give him that attitude of indulgence which sits quite as well on kings as on private individuals. For the rest, dear friend, be happy, tell me that you are so, my happiness will be increased thereby. I do not ask you for news, I know that you would not give me any of any sort, and that is as it should be. I saw the author of the *Henriade*, who pretty well tears to pieces the former idol of his affection, his vanity and his greed. Quick, your news.'

This long tirade of a letter gave me some anxiety. Reflecting, however, that it might very well happen that the King would disdain this outburst and



would not speak to me of it, and that, if he did speak about it, it would be lightly, in a tone of jest, I entered his chamber at four o'clock fairly easy in my mind.

“ Ah, good day, sir, how are you? What have you been doing, what have you seen? ”

After having answered these questions flung out one after the other—“ By the way,” he said to me, “ I sent you two letters, I opened one, and I make you a thousand apologies. There was, I assure you, no ill intention on my part.”

He then related to me what his councillor, Eichel, had told me, and he censured his curiosity which, at the time of the arrival of the letters, had reached an extreme point.

“ You see that I do not spare myself when I do wrong. What amused me in your letter that I read is the tiny little outburst in it against your obedient servant. Voltaire cannot have spared me in your Swissery; but he is a god, let us leave him alone.”

As a little pat at the friend who had written to me was certainly called for, it was given to him indirectly.

“ Young officers are often singular rogues. I saw one once, I think from your country, who wanted to enter my service. I asked him whether he had served in any campaign?—‘ Yes,’ he said. —‘ Under what general?’—‘ Under Marshal de Richelieu.’ And the scoundrel then took it into his head to criticise him. ‘ Stop,’ I said to him,

‘it is indeed fitting for a young man like you to criticise his general as you are doing.’ I would have none of him. That is how they all are; they have scarcely seen anything before they criticise and judge without a shadow of reflection.”

As this story about the young officer had hardly any relevance to the conversation, I took it for my friend, very pleased that the sally had not been so sharp as I had feared.

He spoke finally of his excursion to Opotschna.

“It was not brilliant. M. de Loudon decamped, and of his troops I only captured a captain and 96 men. We sabred a few in the park of Opotschna. That, my dear sir, is the whole of my exploit. Fate, as you see, does not favour me. I am waiting for my letters which are being deciphered. God knows what I shall find; I feel that there will be nothing good. Until to-morrow.”

One of the King’s hussars related this rather amusing incident to me: ‘I was talking on the morning of our arrival in Opotschna with the daughter of the farmer, who told me that the Emperor came there to shoot pheasants, and that he gave nothing to anybody: your King behaves better than our Emperor, but they say that he is no more generous than our prince, and certainly he will give us nothing either. Unfortunately, the King had seen me from his window talking with this girl. When she went off, His Majesty sent for me:

“What were you doing there with that girl?”

‘She was talking to me about the Emperor.’

“What did she say to you about him?”

‘That he sometimes came here to shoot pheasants.’

“And what then?”

‘He pressed me so much that I was obliged to tell him everything. He laughed very much at what the girl said.

“See her again,” he said to me, “make her talk at length, but don’t go giving her . . .”

‘It is not possible to discover a curiosity like the dear Master’s. He wants to know everything, learn everything, down to trifles which often only make him pretend to laugh.’

Such was the language of this hussar of the chamber.

I had never before had an audience that stirred me so much as the one on this day. I have often gone over it again in my mind, and always with emotion.

24th July,  
Königgrätz.

If it is a great spectacle to see a man struggling in great perils against fortune, I saw this spectacle. The cruel position in which the King was, the touching, moderate and firm manner in which he spoke to me of it, the efforts which he determined to make to conquer the fate that persecuted him—all this interested me to a degree which I cannot convey. A man who is suffering sharp anguish and considerable losses, who sees himself on the edge of a precipice, who bears up under his misfortunes without letting fly at fate, and without

giving way to excessive complaints,—such a man is much more interesting without a doubt than he who inveighs against pain and fate with bitter, childish cries and outbursts of imagination and wit, and than he even who, in an excess of vanity, cries out that pains and reverses are not a misfortune. Thus the King appeared to me in this conversation, of which I am about to give a faithful account.

“I have received, my friend, very disastrous news. I am informed that General Fermor, who in June had crossed the Vistula and gathered together his different corps at Posen, has advanced with an army numbering 80,000 men to Meseritz, and that he has pushed forward his advance-guard as far as Schwerin and Kloster-Paradies. I see therefore that he has formed a design on Pomerania and Neumark. There is my plan of remaining here upset, there, new misfortunes still awaiting me, and there, innumerable unfortunates who will be the sad victims of our quarrels. This touches me, my friend, this tears my soul. Perhaps, at this moment in which I am speaking to you, they are laughing at my embarrassments, and they do not for a moment imagine that I suffer more for the misfortune which I fear for my poor people, for so many brave officers who sacrifice themselves for me, than I suffer for my own account; for that matter, are not our misfortunes common to us all? My resolution is taken. You will see me double my efforts to drive away these evils which I have



reason to fear. All the firmness and constancy heaven has bestowed on me will be employed in these critical moments. If, in order to save all, the sacrifice of my life must be made, that life shall be at the disposal of my people and my army ; I will sacrifice it willingly. It will not cost me anything. I have not spared it, sad as it has been, up to the present ; my people will be able to do me that justice. You may be sure, my friend, that I shall not spare it now for the good of a country which is dear to me. Since my departure from Schmirnitz, and following the different reports I had had indirectly, I had ordered certain movements in my other army corps, but according to my letters of yesterday, I see that all this will not suffice to permit me to act on the offensive against Fermor. I must leave Bohemia ; I will leave in Silesia the greater part of my army, and with one corps will march to join Dohna's army, and I will attack the Russians. The Austrians will say that, by their skilful manœuvres, they forced me to leave Bohemia ; but at bottom it is nothing of the sort, my dear sir. Let them say what they like, provided I succeed in the new plan I have been obliged to make. Remember and do not forget that we are not flying, and that we go off with honour. Remember that, in battling with the fate that persecutes me, and in employing all the humanly possible means to make it favourable to me, or less contrary, I will, if necessary, make the sacrifice of my painful life with delight. I owe this sacri-

fice to myself, to my principles, and still more to my people, who are suffering so much for me. You will acknowledge that there never was a prince who was in a like position: attacked on all sides by numerous armies, I must proceed from one place to another, or rather I must run. I am like a man who is continually seeking the end of an epigram, without being able to find it. If I finally succumb, my friend, after so many pains, so many cares, so many fatigues, so many perils, you must confess that there will not have been much glory in having destroyed me and my army.

“ We shall start early to-morrow for Rohenicz. As M. Daun might take it into his head to try on something or other, I shall form the rear-guard. We are going to run at a pace, my dear sir. There will be more question, in our momentary conversations, of marches, rear-guard affairs and battles than of letters and philosophy. Good evening.”

At five o'clock, His Majesty sent orders for me to come to him.

“ This march, my dear sir, was difficult, and we came rather well out of the attack on the suburb of Königgrätz. I lost two officers whom I regret, General de Saldern and Colonel Blanckenberg; it is loss always, as you see. I have pitched my camp on the heights of Jessena and of Kralowa-Lhota—if you wish to remember this sonorous name, you should write it down on your tablets; the right wing touches the first of these villages. Zieten's

25th July,  
at Rohenicz  
head-  
quarters.

hussars cover the right flank of the cavalry, which is encamped as the second line. The chasseurs are in the wood in front of the right; the centre of my army has before it that fine sonorous name Kralowa-Lhota, the left extends towards the wood of Bohuslawitz. Möhring's hussars are placed hard by, and I have stationed Nimschöffsky's battalion here at our headquarters. Rebentisch, who had gone on in front with the supply column and the sick of the army, marched to-day towards Nachod: Fouqué is to cover this march. That is all you will have from me to-day. I am excessively tired, and am going to take advantage of the sleep which is beginning to gain on me. Good evening, until to-morrow. We shall remain several days here."

My audiences during this stay at Rohenicz were very short: the conversation turned, for the most part, on the difficulty of his present position, on the unprecedented difficulty, as he said, of living a decent life when he had to face in all parts and on all sides this crowd of enemies who surrounded him everywhere, on the fact that he was continually compelled to change his plans, and to change them without losing a minute. "All this, my dear sir, is not easy; but what can you do? The cup is there, and the gentleman must drink—or . . ."

He stopped there to ask me whether I had correctly remembered the sonorous names and the position of his camp. I said that I had.

"Well, then, show it to me on this scrap of paper."

I traced the position, and this brought me a *bene dignus in nostro corpore*.

While on the subject of these difficult names, he related to me what had happened to him in his first wars, when he had felt the necessity of knowing a little of the language of the country in which he was waging war.

“ I made myself a little dictionary of the questions I might be called upon to ask in this country of Bohemia. Proud of my dictionary and of my knowledge, I boldly called up a peasant who was passing, and boldly questioned him on the country round about. My peasant listened, and, more of a philosopher than I was, he replied to me with an air of timidity and modesty. Then, like a great simpleton, I opened my eyes wide, and I perceived that it was not sufficient to know how to put questions, but that it was also necessary to be able to understand the replies, and, in order to understand, to have a good knowledge of the language. Can you imagine such folly? You must agree that we should not excuse it in a fifth-form boy. And we often strut about, my dear sir, thinking what fine intellects we have. This little adventure and a few others convinced me that humility is a fine virtue and presumption a silly thing. Would you have believed me capable of such simplicity? ”

‘ Assuredly not.’

“ Well, that is what happened, just as I have told you.”



The King told me, on the 28th, that he had detached General Retzow with 6 battalions, 2 regiments of infantry, 2 regiments of dragoons, one of hussars, to dislodge General Loudon's corps from Opotschna, and afterwards to encamp at Neustadt, in order to cover the left flank of the army and to keep open the communications with Glatz; but M. de Loudon having left his position and retired on Sahornitz, M. de Retzow continued his march to Neustadt, and pitched his camp behind this town.

I was called in the evening at six o'clock. His Majesty talked to me of what he had done during the day.

“The whole of my army crossed the Metau in four columns. Suspecting that General Loudon, encamped behind Opotschna, might try an attack on my rear-guard, I ambushed 10 squadrons of hussars, 2 regiments of dragoons, and 10 battalions of the right wing in the wood which is to the left of this village. I gained nothing for my trouble. Not even a cat appeared from the direction of Opotschna. Our hussars of Zieten's corps gave chase to hussars coming from Librutz, and took an officer and 43 men. That, my dear sir, is the whole of our captures. We are modest, as you see.

“This is how we are encamped, I will rough it out on a piece of paper for you. All my infantry is encamped in the first line, the right wing having before it the wood which is between Jacobi-Hof and Dobrawitz, with outposts beyond it. See my

This 30th July, at Jasnitz or Jessenitz, from the 30th July to the 2nd August.

map : this line occupies the crest of the hills, and Jacobi-Hof is before the front of the army ; the whole is well covered. The left wing extends towards the marshes of Miestetz and backs on to this village. All my cavalry is encamped in the second line.

“ Retzow has had to leave Neustadt this morning and to march to Studnitz. The great Marshal Daun has decamped from Libschan, and marched in three columns towards Holohlaw. He rested his right on Rodow and his left on Ertina. Have you thoroughly followed and understood me, sir ? ”

‘ Yes, Sire.’

“ Well, then, you know as much about it as I do.”

‘ Would to heaven, Sire, that that were so. I should ask you for a corps to command. I flatter myself that you would entrust it to me.’

“ Willingly,” said the King, “ for I believe that you have luck.”

‘ Up to the present, I have only had that of being with Your Majesty.’

“ Ah, my dear sir, that is a queer sort of good fortune. Can an unfortunate prince bring good fortune to anybody, whoever he may be ? ”

‘ May an ignoramus ask Your Majesty for enlightenment on the ambush you set on this march ? ’

“ Yes, it gives me pleasure to see any one seeking to instruct himself. What do you wish to know ? ”

‘Why are so many troops used for an ambush in so small a space? The troops may get into each other’s way, and the great number may lead to their discovery.’

“Your reflection is not altogether bad. When you take it into your head to set an ambush, my dear sir, you must make it a strong one, and the man who commands it must have ability and resolution, without which you run the risk of seeing yourself badly mauled in your own ambush. I know that for these strong ambushes, a very wide space is necessary, and that everybody can be more easily perceived; but it is better to be perceived having too many men, than beaten, having too few. I know also, by the experience of others and my own, that the times on which these strong ambushes succeed are few and far between, but should I neglect the slightest thing when I see a suspicion of a possibility of success? A strong ambush, my dear sir, a strong ambush, and a very intelligent officer at the head, or no ambush at all: put that down on your tablets. But here is my good Zieten who is rejoining me with a slight reinforcement of cavalry. Good evening. We decamp from here to-morrow at early morning.”

Such is the summary of the two conversations I had with His Majesty in this camp of Jessenitz on the two occasions I had the honour of seeing him.

The army broke up its camp at Jessenitz, and marched in three columns towards Skalitz; the cuirassiers were at the head of the first and of

3rd August,  
1758, at  
Kleny.

the second column; the hussars and the free companies formed the rear-guard. The right wing of the camp touched Skalitz. The free companies and the chasseurs were stationed in the park of Skalitz, which is on the other side of the Aupa, to protect the right flank of the army, the front of which was covered by large ponds. All the cavalry was placed on the left wing, which extended towards the height on which is the chapel of Saint Wenceslas. This is what His Majesty told me; he only sent for me for a moment. After having informed me of the manner in which he had encamped, he asked me to felicitate him because he had a great saint, the great Wenceslas, who would doubtless protect him.

“ I am so tired and harassed that I can scarcely open my poor eyes. I am going to bed. Until to-morrow, in another camp, for I must approach nearer to Nachod.”

Very early in the morning, there was a very heavy cannonade. It began at two o'clock; I rose to discover what was happening. The aide-de-camp general told me, several hours afterwards—for it was not known at first what was afoot—that General Loudon with a corps of 7000 to 8000 men had attacked our free corps and the chasseurs stationed in the park of Skalitz, that a battery of 8 pieces of cannon placed on a height opposite this park had opened a very violent fire on them, while a detachment of Croats, making their way along the Aupa under cover of the brushwood, had

This 4th  
August, at  
Wisoka.



attacked the park on all sides, that several mortars and a few pieces of heavy cannon belonging to the right wing of our second line had opened fire on the flank of the enemy and had caused him great losses ; that, in spite of this, the Croats had entered the park, and, on account of their great number, had caused our chasseurs and free companies to fall back ; that Prince Maurice, advancing immediately from Skalitz with two battalions, had, with the free companies who had rallied at his approach, repulsed the enemy with the bayonet ; that, finally, in addition to some fifty Croats whom we had killed on the spot, we had taken 4 officers and 56 men, but that we also had suffered moderate losses.

‘ However,’ he said to me, ‘ if I may venture to put forward my own idea,’ continued the aide-de-camp, ‘ I think that M. de Loudon only undertook this attack on our free companies with the idea that we should start on our march again this morning, and that, with this idea, he had endeavoured to take possession of the heights on the other side of the Aupa in order to cannonade us valiantly when we broke up our camp.’

The same aide-de-camp general told me immediately after dinner that a great deal of movement had been seen in the enemy army, and that we should march at four o’clock.

In fact, the whole army at that hour marched in two columns upon the heights of Wisoka, where it encamped. I was not called.

This 5th  
August,  
at Reuvis or  
Radisch  
head-  
quarters.

I was called at five o'clock. Regarding the attack on the park of Skalitz, His Majesty told me within a very little what his aide-de-camp general had related to me. The difference in the reports, according to the King's, was that the enemy had lost a good many more men, and we a good many less.

“As there is scarcely anything else to talk about except marches, my dear sir, since we are marching continually, I will acquaint you with what I have done. My army has marched in two columns, the first by way of Porzitz, Stiarky and Hochsichel : see my map, and write down these names, for which it would be very difficult to find harmonious and rich rhymes ; the second by way of Nachod, Schlaney, Sedmakowitz and Machau. I covered each column with four battalions of grenadiers, some of the free companies and the chasseurs and a hundred hussars, who formed the rear-guard. My waggons went on in front, and my march was well covered. I have pitched my camp on this side of Politz on the heights bordering the villages of Radisch and Machau. The dragoons are encamped in the third line, all the hussars in front of the army, and my honest free battalions in the nearest woods, where they will plunder a few passers-by, if any fall into their hands. Let us see if you have put that all down accurately on your tablets. You would not believe that this interests me, and that one day I shall very likely have recourse to it.”

‘What, Sire, have recourse to me?’

“Yes, sir, and this is how. I propose to write the

history of this war, if I ever see its end. I have already written the history of '40 and '44, for myself and my successor solely. I will read it to you with my foreword. I made notes for myself of my two preceding campaigns, but I often mislay them, and, more often still, I write so small that I cannot decipher what I have written. Thus your tablets will rectify my scrawl; and thus you and I will pass into immortality. So do not mislay your writings. It will sometimes give you pleasure also to recall what we did, and you will say, in going over it again: 'Here I wrote what this old fighting driveller said to me; here I saw him continually complaining, groaning over his situation, wanting to be out of it, crying out with all his might that his life was a dog of a life, for ever in the pains of burning fever, in an eternal distress as to what would be the outcome of it all, sometimes declaiming fine tragedies to me to lull his anxieties, making me run about like a dog, and sending for me when I had no other desire than to rest or to sleep.' These are the things which your tablets will present to you; but, my friend, let us hope that fate will not always be unkind to us. Eh, what, am I not an old madman to imagine there is still happiness for me?

Oui, déesse, je m'égare,<sup>1</sup>  
 Sois cependant avec moi,  
 Quoi que le sort nous prépare,  
 Que je le brave avec toi,

---

<sup>1</sup> ['Yes, goddess, I am wandering; be with me however; whatever fate may be preparing for us, may I brave it with thee. The bitterness

L'amertume du calice  
 Par toi se change en douceurs,  
 Et les bords du précipice  
 Par toi sont semés de fleurs."

The King was in a good humour, since he was quoting verses. On the following day, he was so well disposed that I ventured to speak to him of the plunderings in the villages by the free battalions and even the regular soldiers. Two days before, on my arrival at Wisoka to take up the quarters which had been assigned to me, I saw that all the peasants who had remained in the village were bewailing their fate with loud cries. All their property and provisions had been taken away from them.

'We are ruined,' they cried, 'we are ruined. What will become of our poor children? Schwerin did not act in this way; he would have hanged a soldier who had only taken a hen from us.'

My servant explained these sorrowful complaints to me. How seldom human prudence is of any help! These poor peasants, thinking that their provisions would be safer in a house where there was an underground cellar, had all carried them there from their homes. One of Lattorff's majors whom I begged to come to the help of these un-

of the cup is changed by thee to sweetness, and the edge of the precipice is sown by thee with flowers.'] This passage is from an ode by Chaulieu to the Imagination. On reading it afterwards in the book, I saw that the King had made several changes:

Non, déesse, je m'égare,  
 Reste toujours avec moi,  
 Quoi que le sort vous prépare,  
 Nous le bravons avec toi.



fortunate people acceded to my request with a kindness that touched me. When he arrived, the last pillagers were still plundering ; but he made them restore everything.

The King expressed to me all the regret which these horrors gave him, and assured me that he had issued the sharpest possible orders against all those, whoever they were, who were guilty of any excess.

‘ And yet, Sire, not only do they plunder, but they also destroy the huts of these unfortunates, when there is wood all ready prepared in front of each billet.’

“ Yes, I know that this riff-raff overthrows the houses ; were they not already on the point of knocking down mine when I arrived. I had the scoundrels soundly thrashed, and ordered the officers on their parole to be careful that no further excesses of the kind were committed. The first man who plunders or destroys a house is to be hanged on the spot. These poor people are much to be pitied.”

‘ If Your Majesty sees that they are so no longer and that they have to suffer no more, they will bless you.’

We marched this day in two columns to Werners-

The 7th  
August, at  
Wernersdorf  
head-  
quarters.

dorf, the first went by way of Politz, Bukowitz, Pickau, Lechau and Bodisch, the second by way of Hutberg and Bergicht. Eight battalions of grenadiers, some free companies, the chasseurs and several hundred hussars formed the rear-guard.

We encamped in three lines on the heights skirting the village of Wernersdorf, where the headquarters were. We saw at Wernersdorf the entrenchments and the abattis which the enemy had constructed in the spring to defend the entry into Bohemia, where they supposed that it was our intention to march. The King ordered the entrenchments to be destroyed and the abattis to be burnt. The army stayed behind here while the baggage train went through the passes.

8th August.

I did not see His Majesty on this day of our arrival. On the following day, I was called for a moment.

“We are all starting from here on the quest of great adventures. To-morrow at three o’clock in the morning, General Seydlitz will go on in front with the bodyguards, the *gens d’armes*, the carabineers and his regiment of cuirassiers. Your obedient servant will follow him, and, with eleven battalions only, will join the army of Count Dohna. Time presses; I shall have to run like a dog; the Russians are advancing in force; they must be stopped; if they win too much ground, all will be over. The Margrave Charles will command the troops which are to remain in Silesia. To-morrow we shall see our Grüssau, where we were more tranquil than we are now. There you will be able to rest<sup>1</sup> after the dog of a life which I have made you lead for the last few

<sup>1</sup> I did not understand the sense of this at the time. I thought that we should stay there for some while.

months. For an apprenticeship, this has not been so bad.”

The King marched in four columns to Friedland. At this place he formed into two columns only, on account of the difficulty of the roads, and pursued his march to Grüssau. He pitched his camp on the heights which are behind Hermsdorf, Grüssau and Neuen. These villages were in front of the army, the left of which stretched beyond the church of Neuen. All the hussars camped opposite the park of Grüssau, which was occupied by the free companies.

9th August,  
Grüssau.

The march was a difficult one ; we did not arrive until rather late in the afternoon. I was not called.

Tired by this march and those which had preceded it, I slept until six o'clock in the evening, and I should have slept still longer, if my servant had not awakened me :

10th August,  
Grüssau.

‘ Sir, I see that they are about to start ; the King is already a long way off.’

‘ Where is he going to, then ? ’

‘ I don't know.’

I told him to pack my kit, dressed quickly, and went to headquarters for information about this departure of the King. I saw one of the aides-de-camp, and asked him :

‘ Where is His Majesty ? ’

‘ At Landshut,’ he said to me, ‘ and to-morrow he will start from there to go and meet the Russians.’

‘ I will join him.’

‘ Did he command you to do so ? ’

‘ No, but I shall go nevertheless.’

‘ Take my advice : do not do so. The King named all those who were to follow him. If he said nothing to you or sent you no word, remain here, and don’t think of going to join him. He will repulse you, as he harshly repulsed all those who asked to accompany him. I who am speaking to you, sir, was sent about my business sharply. He is in a very bad temper. I repeat, take my advice, and remain here.’

I did not take the advice given me ; I mounted my horse, and in all haste made for Landshut. I asked where the King’s quarters were, and learned that they were not in the town, but in the suburbs. On the way there, I met some officers who were returning.

‘ Where are you going ? ’

‘ To His Majesty’s.’

‘ He doubtless commanded you to follow him ? ’

‘ No.’

‘ For the love of heaven, then, do not present yourself to him ; you will raise a storm.’

I went on nevertheless. Those who were to take part in the journey, seeing me arrive, asked me, like the others, whether I had orders to follow, and without waiting for my reply, they said to me :

‘ But why the deuce is he making you run about like this ? ’

‘ He is not making me run about. I have



come of my own accord to ask permission to follow him.'

'Don't think of doing so ; go away immediately ; here is the King coming.'

These gentlemen no doubt rejoiced at the prospect of seeing me dismissed, as so many others had been.

"What is it ?" said the King to me, "what do you want, what are you doing here ?"

I confess, I was very little encouraged by this beginning. I said simply that I had been unaware of his departure from Grüssau, and that I had hastened to beseech him to allow me to follow him. The King, calmer, said to me—the aforementioned gentlemen hearing him distinctly, which rejoiced me in my turn :

"I am obliged to you for your attention. I sent you no word at Grüssau, because I did not wish to add to your fatigues," and, placing his hand on my shoulder, he repeated that he was pleased with me, that he was delighted that I should be willing to make this difficult journey, and he added that what troubled him was that I should be obliged to take a packhorse only, that he himself had only a waggon, because he wanted nothing that might embarrass him on the march.

'Then, Sire, I will have a packhorse only.'

"Good. Go and see where you can pass the night. Good evening, my dear sir, and much obliged."

The officers of his suite hastened round me,

and congratulated me on the fine things that had been said to me. I thanked them for the sincerity of their congratulations, and returned to the town, where I passed the night in the carriage of Sir Andrew Mitchell, who was of the expedition.

This 11th  
August,  
1758, at  
Rohnstock.

The King marched in two columns: the first went by way of Hohenfriedberg to Rohnstock, where the headquarters were; the second billeted in Falkenheim and the neighbourhood. General Seydlitz joined this corps, and the cavalry he commanded was billeted in the villages which are in advance of Rohnstock. His Majesty had had all the baggage of these regiments sent to Schweidnitz.

I had orders at four o'clock in the afternoon to present myself:

“That is one march done; but I must do eight good marches before I shall be within reach of these barbarians and shall make them pay as dearly as I can for the horrors they are committing in my poor country. Wherever they pass, they leave nothing but a track of desolation.

“If against the wish of my heart, I do not succeed as I flatter myself I shall, I shall be blamed without doubt, and yet I shall have done all that it was humanly possible to do. I do not know, my friend, whether you have a very clear idea of my position and of the way in which, in the unfortunate conjuncture in which I find myself, I have often to act against rules that I know to be good, either to extricate myself from a dangerous pass, or to defend

myself against one enemy while I hasten to meet another who is threatening me. I have nearly always to act with a quickness of action and a boldness that circumspection and prudence would not countenance ; but, my dear sir, with all this prudence which is so necessary in less urgent cases than those in which I find myself continually, how can I extricate myself from so many critical and desperate situations, while, however prudently I may maintain myself on one side, I am being despoiled on the other, where the enemy may be so well established that I cannot drive him away ? Thus, my dear sir, I am forced to admit into my plans more of the fortuitous than I should admit in a less difficult situation. I have to work and run about like Hercules, without having the strength of that son of great Jupiter.

“ But, my friend, with all this fortuitousness which I am compelled to admit, with these precipitate enterprises which I have to enter upon, with these prompt decisions which I have to take, how is it possible not to make blunders, how is it possible to avoid all reproach and not to leave your flank exposed to criticism ? I hope that the people of my profession who will have formed a just idea of my situation, who will have seen that, in this war which I am waging with so much vigour, I must finally be overwhelmed by so many forces united against me, will have some indulgence for the mistakes which I have committed, and which I am perhaps about to commit again, and will say at

least—with Turenne, who is the master of all of us—that he who in our profession is not guilty of any mistake has not long waged war.

“You have now, my dear sir, the secret of my position and of the very precipitate manner in which I have to decide and to act. You know how desirous I am of getting out of these accursed straits in which I am and of saving the country. If the country and myself are to be more unhappy, if all is to be over with us, pray, my friend, that the first cannon-ball may carry off my head. I do not wish to keep you any longer. To-morrow, we start at dawn. Good evening. Much obliged again for the pleasure you have given me in wishing to accompany me.”

Let me be permitted to affirm here once for all that, if I have reported and if I report these expressions of the King's kindness as regards myself, it is certainly not out of vainglory that I make known the gracious manner in which the King treated me. I proposed, as I have said, to give a faithful account of the conversations with which he honoured me, and I have done so without omitting anything, not even the phrases and terms he used, as far, that is, as I could remember them. Although the favours of a great man for those who serve him and are devoted to him honour the objects of those favours, the great man who displays them is more interesting, since we naturally expect kindness and indulgence from true greatness. Those who were in the King's suite did not think



that he had this kindness and indulgence. They complained that he often abused his royal prerogative, that, for the slightest thing, he broke that first and most holy law of society not to say anything offensive to anybody, and to humiliate nobody, whoever it may be. It will be seen by what I have just said that this was not always the case, and that there were a few exceptions to the rule. When I have observed that the King sometimes repulsed perhaps a little too harshly those who came to give an account of an errand with which they had been charged, I have reported it with the same frankness as I report what concerns me.

I return to our marches : on the 12th, the King <sup>12th-20th</sup> pushed on as far as Liegnitz ; on the 13th to <sup>August.</sup> Heinzendorf, where we stayed on the 14th ; we were at Dalke on the 15th, at Wartenberg on the 16th, at Plaute on the 17th, at Crossen on the 18th, at Ziebingen on the 19th, where the whole corps encamped, with the exception of Asseburg's regiment, which covered the headquarters. On the 20th, the King went to Frankfort, the infantry entering the town and the cavalry encamping in front of the suburb of Lebus. If the reader will take the trouble to consult the map of the country, he will see with surprise the speed with which this corps marched in a time of extreme heat.

During the whole of this march, the King, after having attended to his military business, read for himself in the morning the three volumes of Cicero's

*Tusculan Questions*, and every evening at five o'clock, when I was always called, he read *On the Nature of the Gods* to me. He often made observations, which I will recount on another occasion, but what surprised me, I confess, was that, having so often the opportunity of touching on religion, as was usual to him, he said nothing at all about it, although his reading would have led up to it. All that he said to me, when the question arose of the magnificent order which shone in all parts of the universe, was this exclamation :

“ Oh, my friend, a man who does not admit a being who is the keeper of this universe, has lost all common-sense; so many admirable ends, so many means of arriving at them, evidently indicate an intelligence which has conceived these ends and employed these means to fulfil them. We see intelligence in men; therefore we must suppose that there is a superior intelligence which has imparted to them the intellect they possess. Are you not of my opinion ? ”

‘ Doubtless, Sir. I should be destitute of all sense if I were not so; the proof is evident.’

“ I would call it rather,” he said, “ a moral evidence.”

At Wartenberg, His Majesty lodged with the Jesuits, I think it was, and while walking with me in the courtyard, he heard a moaning voice which came from an underground cellar. He called a brother :

“ What is this I hear ? It seems to me that some

one is moaning?" and he looked at the brother whom he was questioning. He perceived from the physiognomy of the man that there was something extraordinary afoot, and all the more so because he stammered his reply.

"I must know absolutely what is the matter. Speak the truth, or I'll put the devil on the heels of you all."

The poor disconcerted brother, intimidated by the King's tone, said :

'Sire, it is a brother who has very badly misbehaved ; he is doing penance.'

"Call your superior to me, and let this prisoner be brought out promptly. I want to see him and speak to him."

The King was obeyed. His Majesty seeing what was really a skeleton appear began by saying with great indignation to the father and the few brothers present :

"It must be acknowledged that you are great scum to treat a poor unfortunate thus."

He questioned the prisoner.

'Sire, it is true I neglected several rules of obedience, and I have been kept nearly a year in a dungeon on bread and water, and I have often received chastisement.'

Then the King, more indignant still, apostrophised these gentlemen with all the energetic epithets of the German tongue, and, after having treated them as low wretches, he charged them seriously to look after the brother, and to treat

him henceforth with as much kindness as they had hitherto used harshness.

“You will answer to me for it; and you”—addressing the unfortunate brother—“inform me whether they treat you as I order; if they do not, I’ll have the devil ride roughshod over them all.”

Finally, he ended his outburst with a short sermon on tolerance, and on the spirit of charity which forgives and admonishes kindly those who go astray.

The King had the goodness to explain to me what I had not been able to understand.

“What wretches these scoundrels are, and it is I,<sup>1</sup> bred in war to the horrors of slaughter, who must raise my voice for the unfortunate; while blood does not flow fast enough for these ministers of peace.”

At Crossen, while the King was reading *On the Nature of the Gods*, a letter was brought to him which expatiated at length on the horrors committed by the Cossacks, Küstrin having been reduced to ashes. The blood mounted to his face as he read the letter.

“Feel my forehead,” he said, “how it burns. You see I have the utmost difficulty in restraining the violence of the first moment.<sup>2</sup> I fear nothing for myself, but for my poor people. As regards myself, my mind is made up. If I am to be killed, well and good: I have said my prayer, Epicurean

<sup>1</sup> He is alluding to what Abner in *Athalie* says to the priest Mathan.

<sup>2</sup> “The rif-raff!” he said, “can such incendiarism be permitted?”



fashion." And he repeated it to me, as I have already written it down.

That is a summary of what passed in my audiences from Rohnstock to this place.

Although the King was excessively fatigued by the difficult march and the unprecedented heat of the day, he yet sent for me at six o'clock. The 20th August, at Frankfort.

"I have called for you to tell you, my dear sir, that, although I am sensible of your kind attention in following me"—these were his very expressions—"it would yet give me pleasure if you would remain here, while I go and fight the Russians. Listen to me: my enemies accuse me of requiring everybody who is attached to me to fight and expose himself. This is a calumny; but, nevertheless, if you follow me and in the battle some misfortune befalls you, which can very easily come about, these enemies will say: there he is again, exposing without reason those who are not called upon as part of their duty to expose themselves. And then, while they will cry out on me, they will laugh at you. They will say, what the deuce was he doing there? So, my friend, remain here. Pray for our success, and if I come back from this affair, which will take place very shortly now, I will call for you on my return."

After having humbly represented that, having come so far, I burned with all the greater desire to go on farther, the King insisted, and I insisted in reply with still more respect.

"You wish it then, well and good; but remember

to say that I warned you, and that I asked you to remain here until after the battle.

“To-morrow morning, I will march with the cavalry to Manschnow, where I shall find the army of Count Dohna ; as General Fermor has made near Schaumburg a demonstration of his intention to cross the Oder, Dohna has encamped where he has in order to defend the passage.”

21st August,  
at Man-  
schnow.

As soon as the King had arrived in Manschnow, he reconnoitred immediately the banks of the river, as well as the position of the enemy before Küstrin. General Fermor had dug a trench in front of the embankment of the Oder, and although the fire of his artillery continued to be very violent, the works of the place were not yet damaged. The King, at the sight of Küstrin reduced to ashes, expressed his great indignation, and all the cavalry who met him on his passage cried out to him: ‘Father, be easy, we will sabre these wretches, and we will give them no quarter ; we are all sharpening our sabres.’

I seized this opportunity of the King’s going over the town to see it also myself. This spectacle of so many fine houses destroyed and of so many unfortunate people who had lost everything and had no refuge anywhere stirred me exceedingly. I saw the castle, and had shown to me the room which the King had occupied. It was a great shock to me to see a kind of hole. Reflections crowded into my brain, and in comparing the present time with the past, I could not hold back

my tears. It was still a time of misfortune, but misfortune of a different kind : the heir presumptive of the crown shut up, and running the risk of losing his head, and this prince, now the King, ready to give battle before the place which had caused him so many sorrows, and running all the risks of a combat which is always uncertain, and in which he might lose his crown with his life, or might see himself surrounded by still more frightful abysses.

The King, who had perceived me while crossing Küstrin, said to me in the evening :

“ You must confess, my dear sir, that the spectacle of this unfortunate town was heart-rending.”

‘ Yes, Sire : I was saddened, indeed.’

“ You might perhaps have seen that horrible place where I was so barbarously shut up.”

‘ I saw it, Sire, and I shed many tears.’

The King, placing his hand on my shoulder, said, “ My friend, let us not speak of the past, but give our minds to the present, which may yet be much more fatal to me than the other. I have had many sorrows in my life, God knows, but, after all, are we not made to suffer, and what is this life we cherish so much ? A little fleeting smoke, making more or less of an outward show.

“ I have detached Manteuffel with the advance-guard to take up a position opposite the village of Schaumburg, where the enemy has established a battery to protect the passage of the river. Kanitz has marched to Wrietzen with two regiments to



escort the boats coming away from that place for the construction of our bridge over the Oder.”

This 22nd  
August, at  
Gorgast.

We arrived in Gorgast. The infantry which the King had taken with him and which he had left for a day at Frankfort in order to rest, arrived in the early morning in this village. I was called for a moment during the morning.

“The horrors,” said the King to me, “are now about to begin. We shall march this evening at nightfall, and to-morrow, if it pleases fortune, we shall cross the great river. I will tell you in our next quarters all that I shall have done. Go and rest, and do not forget to pray for one who has need of the prayer of the just.”

This 23rd  
August, at  
Klossow.

All the infantry and the hussars, who had struck their camp at nightfall on the day before and marched in two columns, arrived at Gústebiese at seven o'clock in the morning, without finding any Russians either in the village or on the heights on the other side of the Oder. As the King had carefully made all his preparations for crossing the Oder, they began to build the bridge at nine o'clock; it was finished by mid-day. While the bridge was being built, the advance-guard and a part of Zieten's hussars crossed the river on ferry-boats; but, the bridge once finished, Ruesch and Malachowski's regiments began to file over; the infantry with the artillery train followed them, and the cavalry, which had only struck its camp that morning at three o'clock, passed over last. That is what I saw for myself and what the King



told me in the evening at Klossow, whither he had marched with the advance-guard, after the greater part of the army had crossed the river.<sup>1</sup>

“ We crossed successfully. I am pleased to have seen all my army so well disposed to fight. Father, they cried out to me several times on the road, lead us quickly to the enemy ; we wish to conquer or die, all of us, for Your Majesty. This language touched me.”

‘ I also heard these cries, Sire. I had them translated to me, and I blessed heaven for this happy disposition to fight well.’

What I did not know, and what His Majesty had the kindness to explain to me, was that, by the manœuvre he had carried out, the corps of General Rumianzow, who was at Schwedt, was cut off from his army. Our own army encamped between Zellin and Klossow, where our headquarters were set up.

Before entering the King’s quarters, I had seen something that had made me extremely indignant. A Kalmuck who had been taken prisoner had been brought to His Majesty’s quarters. A general, seeing him, advanced and began to abuse the poor devil in terms which he did not understand. Seeing that the Kalmuck had an image hanging on his breast, the general tried to touch it with his stick. The prisoner, believing that the general wished to take away his saint, hid it with his two

<sup>1</sup> A battalion of Hårdt’s free companies remained at Güstebiese to guard the bridge.

hands. Then the general in a rage struck him on the hands with his stick so violently that they became swollen and black. As the Kalmuck held his ground and his saint, looking sorrowfully all the while at the general who was striking him in so cruel a fashion, the latter dealt him some blows on the face and fetched blood. At this spectacle, I became angry. I said to him that, if these Kalmucks and Cossacks were taxed with barbarity, there were other people who could be taxed with still greater barbarity. 'What,' he said, 'the etc.?'—'If the King had seen this spectacle, which shocks so strangely the first principles of humanity . . . '—At this word, the general calmed down, and begged me never to speak of this affair.

'But you must confess that they are scum, these people.'

I made no answer; but I heard with pleasure all those who were present cry out against the inhumanity of this general of infantry.<sup>1</sup>

24th August,  
1758, at  
Neudammer-  
Mühle head-  
quarters.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the King marched in two columns, and towards eight o'clock in the evening, he entered the camp between Nabern and Dermietzel. He posted the advance-guard himself at the canal of Mietzel; this advance-guard with a portion of the artillery had crossed the bridge of Dammühle and thereby had the said canal at its back. We could see while on the march a portion of the enemy camp on the hill at Zicher; we even saw his cavalry form up in

<sup>1</sup> It was General de B.

battle order at our approach, but there was no engagement.

As we had arrived so late at the camp and we were on the eve of a battle, and I had already seen the King before setting out, I certainly did not think that I should be called. I was, however, at about nine o'clock in the evening. I found the King in a very small room of the mill, occupied in writing. I thought that the King was making his dispositions for the battle, but not at all ; he was writing verses.

‘Verses, Sire ? And to-morrow Your Majesty will give battle !’

“Well, what is there so extraordinary in that ? Can I not, like anybody else, employ myself on verses and amuse myself by making some, perhaps pretty bad ones ? I have given my mind the whole day to the capital affair, which I have turned about in all ways. My plan is made, my decision taken. I may well be permitted, it seems to me, to scribble and rhyme just like anybody else ?”

‘Nobody, Sire, will dispute that permission. I say merely that in so critical a moment as must be the moment of giving battle, it is very difficult to find any inclination to versify.’<sup>1</sup>

“When you have been accustomed for a long time, as I have been, to all this brawl of battles, you will not think it so strange that, on the eve

<sup>1</sup> [There is some doubt whether this incident actually did take place on this day, Catt being suspected of having advanced the date for *artistic* effect !]

of the day on which a battle is to be fought, any one should amuse himself as I am doing. Besides, sir, I am not composing; I am endeavouring to correct an author and to do better than he, if it is possible. When you left me to-day, I wished to read Rousseau's Ode to Fortune, and, in opening my book, I fell on the Ode to Count de Sinzendorff, two strophes of which seemed to me rather ill-written. A moment's patience, sir, I have the last strophe to look over and rewrite. I shall soon be done, and I will show you my fine work.—Here it is; perhaps, for a day of fatigue as this has been, you will find that the poet has again come off well with his great work."

'Yes, Sire, Your Majesty has come off well in such a moment. I doubt whether the generals whom you have and will have to combat ever write verses on the eve of a battle.'

"I have a better opinion of them than you have. They would write verses just as I do, if they knew how. This little exercise refreshes your head and your ideas, and I have great need for both my head and my ideas to be fresh."

'As this little exercise, as Your Majesty calls it, seems to me a very singular thing, may I venture to ask you for this sheet which you have just written. It will always recall to me a remarkable and interesting circumstance.'

"Certainly," he said; "if it will give you any pleasure, and if you attach a value to it which it assuredly does not deserve—keep it and do what



you like with it. The ode is a rather difficult form. Malherbe brought to it a great correctness of poetic harmony and style. If poets are generally unsuccessful with odes, especially with odes of praise, it is because they exaggerate too much. By carrying the praise too far, it becomes cruelly insipid. My beloved Racine, in his odes, is at an immense distance from his tragedies. I require a commentary for the first; I need none for the latter, and, with these, although he says in verse almost what I might say in prose, yet there is nothing to equal the magic and harmony of his verses."

'I think, Sire, that it would be very difficult to rewrite passably a passage from Racine, for example :

Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots.'

"You are right, that would be very difficult, but, my dear sir, suppose I try what I can do with it?"

He had already picked up his pen,<sup>1</sup> when the generals were announced.

"Wait a moment here. I will go out and give them the dispositions; each one must know perfectly what he has to do. If my plans are followed, I hope all will go well."

The King went out, and, after having perorated for half an hour :

"Well, everything has been said. Let us see

<sup>1</sup> I constantly remarked that it was sufficient to propose a difficult thing to him, whatever it might be, for him to set about overcoming the difficulty.

now what I shall have to say about *celui qui met un frein.*"

A quarter of an hour afterwards, he had finished this imitation, which I asked him to give me also.

"Now, my friend, here are some grapes; let us eat them, for who knows who will eat grapes to-morrow. We shall start at break of day.

"I shall attack the Russians with my left wing; I shall refuse the right, and it is here that I advise you to remain; you will be less exposed there than anywhere else. Cling to the regiment of my poor brother, the Prince of Prussia. I hope that you will only have cannon fire to suffer. Good evening; I am going to bed, where I shall certainly need no one to lull me to sleep. Try, my friend, to find a spot on which to rest your head. If you hear the fire receding, remember that this means that things are going well with us. Good evening; pray for me, for my army, and do not forget yourself."

Here are the strophes corrected and imitated :

*Rousseau's Odes, Ode 6, to Count de Sinzendorff.*

*Rousseau's Second Strophe.*

Les troupeaux ont quitté leurs cabanes rustiques,  
Le laboureur commence à lever ses guérets.  
Les arbres vont bientôt de leurs têtes antiques  
Ombrager les vertes forêts.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ['The flocks have left their rustic shelters; the ploughman begins to turn the fallow fields; soon the trees will shade the green forests with their ancient heads.']

*The same Second Strophe by the King.*

Les troupeaux ont quitté leurs cabanes rustiques,  
 Le laboureur actif sillonne les guérets.  
 Un vent tendre et naissant sur les rameaux antiques  
 Orne les arbres des forêts.<sup>1</sup>

*Rousseau's Third Strophe.*

Déjà la terre s'ouvre et nous voyons éclore  
 Les prémices charmans de ses dons bienfaisans.  
 Cérès vient à pas lents à la suite de Flore  
 Contempler ses nouveaux présens.<sup>2</sup>

*The same Third Strophe by the King.*

Déjà d'un sein fécond la terre fait éclore  
 Ses prémices charmans, l'espoir des moissonneurs,  
 Les champs sont embellis par les présens de Flore,  
 Et Phébus brille sans ardeurs.<sup>3</sup>

## RACINE.

*Athalie, Act i. scene 1. Joad to Abner.*

Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots,  
 Sait aussi des méchans arrêter les complots ;  
 Soumis avec respect à sa volonté sainte,  
 Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ['The flocks have left their rustic shelters ; the busy ploughman furrows the fallow fields. A soft and rising wind on the ancient branches adorns the green forests.']

<sup>2</sup> ['Already the earth is opening, and we see bursting forth the charming first-fruits of her beneficent gifts. Ceres comes with slow steps in Flora's train to behold her new presents.']

<sup>3</sup> ['Already from her fruitful bosom the earth sends forth her charming first-fruits, the hope of the harvesters. The fields are bedecked with the gifts of Flora, and Phebus shines without heat.' Needless to add, the King had not improved on Rousseau.]

<sup>4</sup> ['He who checks the fury of the waves can also stop the plots of the wicked ; respectfully submissive to his holy will, I fear God, dear Abner, and have no other fear.']

*Imitation by the King.*<sup>1</sup>

Celui qui par un mot créa les éléments,  
 Peut secourir le juste, et perdre les méchants ;  
 A ses ordres sacrés j'obéis sans me plaindre,  
 Me confiant en lui, quel mortel puis-je craindre ?<sup>2</sup>

If Voltaire considers that verses written in a town that one has taken or after a victory make very singular memoirs for the future historian, I am persuaded that verses written almost at the moment of giving battle make an interesting anecdote.

It is much more difficult, in my opinion, to preserve this liberty of mind while reading in the chapter of accidents than while reading in the chapter of realities.

This 25th  
 August,  
 1758, battle.

I passed the rest of the evening at the foot of a tree, wrapped in my cloak. After midnight, seeing a light in a little tent, I went into it to note down a short summary of the conversation I had had. Thence I passed into the King's quarters ; he was already taking his coffee. I asked the lackey who had been on duty whether His Majesty had rested a little.

'Rested, sir ? He slept so soundly that I had some difficulty in awakening him.'

25th August.

At the break of day, the army crossed the Mietzel in two columns, as the advance-guard had

<sup>1</sup> In September of the same year, His Majesty tried to write another imitation. He worked at it a good hour, but did not succeed.

<sup>2</sup> ['He who created the elements with a word, can succour the just and destroy the wicked ; I obey his holy command without complaining ; trusting in him, what mortal can I fear?']



done yesterday. After having crossed this river, it formed up in battle order, and pursued its march in three columns. The first two were composed of the infantry, and the third of the cavalry.

His Majesty took the lead with the advance-guard, which was commanded by General Mantuffel. The army defiled by the left, keeping to the wood until near Batzlow. In the forest, the infantry and the cavalry sang hymns, which seemed to displease the King.

“My b—— are afraid,” he said, “for they are singing the psalms of Clément Marot; it will soon be another kind of music.”

When we left the forest, the infantry passed through the village of Batzlow which I have just mentioned and through the village of Wilkersdorf; the cavalry rode by the side of the infantry. With the idea of turning the enemy's right flank, the King pushed on as far as the marsh of Quartschen, or Hofebruch. It was not until we came opposite Zorndorf that we discovered the enemy drawn up in battle order. By having gone round this place, we approached the enemy from the rear.

It appears that General Fermor, having discovered us the evening before at Klossow, suspected the King's design of turning him, and he had probably spent the whole night in changing his position, for we could perceive, by the different movements that were being made, that they were still at it.

They were drawn up in four lines in a kind of

long square; the right touched the wood of Quartschen, and this flank was protected by the Hofebruch and by deep ravines.

The left extended beyond Zicher, which was to the rear of this wing, and touched the wood of this village.

The King, having planned to attack the right wing of the enemy and to refuse his own, arranged in battle order behind Zorndorf the advance-guard composed of six battalions and one regiment; the left of this advance-guard was supported by a ravine, which it had orders to keep close to during the whole of the attack; the right wing had before its front the village of Zorndorf, which the Cossacks had abandoned at our approach, after having set fire to it.

Twenty pieces of cannon were placed before the left wing of the battalions selected for the first attack, and 40 pieces were placed on the right of the village, covered by a battalion.

The King also drew up the army in battle order, the two lines of infantry being supported on their left by a marsh, and the right extending towards Wilkersdorf, which was opposite the flank of this wing. All the cavalry was drawn up in the third line.

Such were the preparations for this day. The attack was ordered at about nine o'clock, the battery to the left of Zorndorf opening fire; the battery of the right a little later. The army moved forward, the right of the advance-guard passing

through Zorndorf, in spite of the flames, the left a little below this village. The army followed at a certain distance to support the attack. A very violent fire on both sides lasted until about eleven o'clock, when our advance-guard joined issue with the enemy; then began the musketry fire. Our infantry attacked the right of the enemy so suddenly that it fell back, and threw its first two lines on to the third, our grenadiers piercing it with their bayonets at the end of their muskets.

Doubtless, this first shock would have been decisive, if certain unfortunate circumstances had not upset its effect. Our advance-guard, which, as I have said, had gone through the village of Zorndorf and had formed in line in admirable order beyond it, drew a little too far to the right when it moved forward towards the enemy. In this way, it got away from the ravine by the side of which it should have kept all the time in order not to leave its own flank bare, and in order to fall on the enemy's.

This mistake might have been set right by the left wing of the first line, if it had extended its flank by a battalion beyond this wing of the advance-guard, which would not then have been open to attack; but this was not done, and the enemy took advantage of the fact; his cavalry appeared, and, falling on the left wing, put it to flight; the cavalry placed in the third line could not arrive soon enough to help the left wing which was taking to its heels. However, General Seydlitz,



coming forward with a few regiments to meet the Russian cavalry, attacked it and drove it forward until it reached their infantry of the right wing. He also drove in this wing with the most determined bravery, and made a frightful slaughter of it, throwing back the two Russian lines on to the third. Zieten and Malachowski's hussars joined General Seydlitz, and distinguished themselves in their attack in a most particular fashion. This badly handled wing fled with the greatest precipitation into the woods of Quartschen and towards the Mietzel. If the country people had not burned the bridges, the battle would have been decided, so much do the events of this world depend on causes which we cannot foresee. The enemy, having no retreat, and being forced to drown or to defend himself, decided on the second alternative. He held firm in the wood, and defended himself by opening fire again.

When the King saw the battalions of his left in disorder and disinclined to rally, and while the left wing of the Russians was marching to support the remnants of the right, he rode in all haste to the right wing, and stopped before the regiment of the Prince of Prussia, to which I had been assigned.

“May God have pity: *dass sich Gott im Himmel erbarme,*” he cried in a rather loud voice, but Prince Maurice, aware of the misfortune that had happened, foreseeing all the consequences, and perhaps not very pleased with the King's exclamation,



took off his hat, threw it into the air, and, with a resolute mien and sonorous voice, cried out :

‘ Long live the King, the battle is won ! ’

The line cried : ‘ Long live the King ! ’ His Majesty seemed to smile a moment. Prince Maurice and General Bülow said :

‘ Comrades, those in front of you whom you see making off are Russian prisoners who are being led away. Come, now, long live the King, march ! ’

His Majesty, passing before the Prince of Prussia’s regiment at a trot, said :

“ My friends, fight on a moment longer ; hold firm, and all will be well.”

Then the whole wing, composed of Wedell, Kalckstein, Forcade, the Prince of Prussia and Asseburg’s regiments, marched forward, and did prodigies of valour, the last two regiments acquiring on this day an immortal glory.<sup>1</sup> It dislodged the enemy from his position, and took his cannon. Our cavalry appeared again, and wrought frightful havoc on this flying Russian infantry ; every man who could be sabred was so without mercy. The Russians did not ask for quarter, and they received none. One part of this Russian infantry, being at the same time pushed back by the brave regiments I have just mentioned on to its right wing, was pursued by our cavalry right up to the ravine, by which this wing had been supported at the beginning of the battle.

The right wing of our infantry advanced as far

<sup>1</sup> This is what the King said.

as the marshes which are beside Quartschen, took several other pieces of cannon, and destroyed nearly all the enemy's infantry which was protecting the military chest, part of which it captured. The enemy, seeing his left wing thrown back on his centre, and then on to the right wing, seeing also that he had no way of retreat and that he was being pressed, turned about in such a way that at the end of the battle (towards eight o'clock in the evening, when firing ceased on both sides) his army, in a state of extreme confusion, was behind Zorndorf. It faced on the opposite side its position of the morning, and occupied a part of the ground on which the left of our advance-guard had been at the beginning of the battle. It passed the night thus in great disorder. Our army passed the night under arms, among the enemy's dead, on the heights which lie between Quartschen and Zicher. The first of these villages stood before the right wing. What remained of the battalions of our left wing, the greater part of which had fled, were stationed behind Zicher, which the enemy had burned on his retreat. As the Cossacks had during the day set fire to all the villages which were on the field of battle and in the neighbourhood, it was a heart-rending spectacle to see these villages blazing, and the peasants and their wives either burnt or massacred by these barbarians.

The battle being unquestionably won, the King, at a quarter past eight in the evening, wrote a letter on a drum to the queen, and one to the ministry.

He asked if any one knew where I was. His aide-de-camp, M. de Krusemarck, told him that I was near by. I was called; I congratulated His Majesty on winning the battle, and thanked him for having asked just before mid-day whether anybody had seen me.<sup>1</sup>

“As I knew that you were on the right wing, I was curious to learn whether you were still there. Did I not tell you, my friend, that a day of battle was a day of horror, and what do you think of these barbarians who have burned all my villages and my poor peasants? Seydlitz has made these incendiaries pay very dearly for the horrors they have committed.”

While listening to the King, I perceived a Russian with a bare sabre who was in the middle of the group surrounding His Majesty. I drew attention to him.

“Take the sabre away from that rogue,” said the King, “how comes he to be here?—Wait a moment, and I will speak to you again. I have a few orders to give; this will soon be done.”

A quarter of an hour afterwards, I entered his little tent that had been set up for him, and I congratulated him again on the successes of the day.

“The day was terrible, and at one moment everything was going to the devil. Everything would

<sup>1</sup> At a quarter to twelve, the King asked his aide-de-camp, M. d’Oppen, who told M. Mitchell, who told me, much affected by the King’s attention.

have gone, my friend, without my brave Seydlitz, and without the courage of my right wing, and especially of the regiment of my dear brother and of Forcade's regiment. I tell you, they saved the State and me, and therefore my gratitude will live as long as the glory they have acquired on this day, as my indignation against those Prussian regiments on which I counted will not cease. These jackanapes fled like old w——, and gave me a few moments of most cruel anguish. The b—— were in a panic terror, from which it was impossible to make them recover. How cruel it is to depend on such a band of rogues.”

‘But at any rate, Sire, the battle is won, and I congratulate Your Majesty from the bottom of my soul.’

I was certainly not expecting verses at this moment, and yet I had these as a reply, apparently to my congratulations :

Jugez, insensés que nous sommes—  
 Nous admirons de tels exploits,  
 Est-ce donc le malheur des hommes  
 Qui fait la vertu des grands rois ?  
 Leur gloire féconde en ruines,  
 Sans les meurtres et les rapines—  
 Ne saurait-elle subsister ?  
 Images des dieux sur la terre,  
 Est-ce par des coups de tonnerre  
 Que leur grandeur doit éclater ? <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rousseau's Ode to Fortune. [‘Judge, madmen that we are—we admire such exploits. Is it then the misfortune of men which makes the virtue of great kings? Their glory fruitful in ruin, could it not endure without murders and rapine? Images of the gods on earth, must their greatness be made manifest by the roll of thunder?’]



“ And, my dear sir,

Quel vainqueur ne doit qu'à ses armes  
Ses triomphes et son bonheur——”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps he would have finished the strophe, if some bread and butter had not been brought in. The King ate three slices in succession without saying a word ; he then said :

“ I think that you will not be unwilling to eat also ; take the two slices that remain. It is not much for a young man who doubtless has not broken his fast ; but in this world, and especially on a day of battle, we must do as we can. Did you understand anything of this diabolical day ? ”

‘ Sire—I grasped the purpose of the march and of the arrangements made to give battle ; I followed the beginning of the affair ; but the rest escaped me ; I understood nothing of the movements carried out.’

“ You are not the only one, my friend, you are not the only one : console yourself.”

‘ I asked for a few explanations during the battle ; but I do not know whether they are correct.’

“ Well, to-morrow, if it is quiet, I will send for you ; you will tell me how the thing was explained to you, and I will supply what is lacking. I am now going to lie down fully dressed on my pallet ; I am sorry that you must pass the night in the open, among the dead and the dying. That is

<sup>1</sup> [‘ What conqueror owes only to his arms his triumphs and his good fortune——’]

what comes of accompanying on his wanderings an old warrior who was, is and will be ever on the move. Sleep, if that is possible; I myself am too agitated to hope for a little rest, of which I have great need, for my poor head is devilishly drowsy."

At daybreak, the King reconnoitred the field of battle; he saw that the enemy, whose regiments had been mixed up together, was busy disentangling himself and forming into brigades. His Majesty marshalled his troops, placing the infantry on the right wing, which had on its flank the village of Quartschen and rested on Hofebruch; some hussars were placed on this wing to support it. The cavalry was placed on the left wing, which stretched towards Wilkersdorf. When the baggage train, which had remained at Damm, arrived at noon, the army pitched its tents on the place on which the King had drawn it up for battle.

In the morning, his only movement was to withdraw the left wing a little nearer to Zicher; nearly all the cavalry was encamped in the second line.

The whole day passed in cannonades, without engagements on either side. The King, while observing the enemy during the morning, was exposed to a fire of grape-shot; Colonel de Schwerin, who was in command of the *gens d'armes*, urged on him to retire.

'Do you not see that they are trying to hit you?'

"I do not see."

'In the name of all the devils, if you do not see

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it, do you not at least hear the balls whistling all round us and ploughing up the ground a few paces from your horse ?’

“ Rubbish, M. de Schwerin.”

‘ Well, then, remain as long as you please ; as for me, I owe myself to the regiment which I have the honour of commanding, and I am going to place myself at the head of it.’

The King laughed greatly at this little comedy, so comically played. His Majesty’s large tent had been erected, and he had taken up his quarters in it, as though he would have to remain there several days in succession. I was called three times during the day.

“ You see me lodged here as I am at *Pose-dam*,<sup>1</sup> with my books, my papers, and all I require to scribble with ; my maps are my hangings, and these are better than those made of brocade.

“ Well, sir, how do we stand with yesterday’s affair, what did you see yourself, and what did the others tell you of what you did not understand ? ”

I gave an account of all I knew. The King stopped me now and then to put me right ; he told me the story of the whole affair, and, to aid my comprehension, he sketched on a piece of paper, which I have preserved, his position, that of the enemy, the manner in which he had attacked, the movements which had been carried out, and, to mark the ravines or the marshes, he shook ink

<sup>1</sup> He imitated by this pronunciation the Marquis d’Argens, who could never pronounce Potsdam,

from his pen ; this ink, falling too freely, spoiled it all, and it had to be begun again. Finally, he shook less vigorously, and the little plan became intelligible enough. After having finished it, he asked me if I had understood thoroughly.

‘ Yes, Sire.’

“ Well, sir, repeat your lesson. You see that I am very severe with you.”

While he was making this little plan of the battle for me, the cannon-balls passed rather often over and by the tent. He would then look at me and say :

“ These fine gentlemen will not disturb our work ; how we can get accustomed to noise.”

In the interval between the second and the last audience I had, I wrote out my lesson on the battle. When I entered, I showed it ; the King read it, and with the exception of a few changes which he made, he thought it passable enough. He read me three pages and a half which he had also written in this interval. As soon as I had heard them, I wanted to tear up my own scribble.

“ Do not tear up what you have done ; it will be a souvenir for you, and, as I told you, it will pass.”

It is because of these words of the King that I give here this account just as I wrote it with the intention of showing it to the King. I ask for the same indulgence for it which the King showed. However, I shall be more prudent henceforward, and will venture but rarely on what may concern military questions, even those which the King



himself may have condescended to speak to me about. I feel that, by entering, in future, into such detail as I have done for the kind of account I have given, I should be led too far, and should draw upon myself well-deserved criticisms. This altogether new scene for me and the kindness of the King in enlightening me and in straightening out my ideas tempted me; but I am well aware that, in order to obtain indulgence, it will reasonably be required of me that I shall not give way any more to this temptation.

The King again spoke to me indignantly of those Prussian regiments which had fled in so cowardly a fashion, and with all the enthusiasm of gratitude and admiration of General Seydlitz, of his right wing, and especially of the regiment of the late Prince of Prussia and of that of General Forcade.

“These regiments and Seydlitz saved me. What could I not do if I had more of such commanders and of such troops!”

I was surprised, I confess, that he only spoke in passing of Prince Maurice and of his bravery; yet he, at a moment which the King's exclamation might have made still more critical, threw up his hat, and shouted out and made his men shout out, *Long live the King!* Returning once more to the brave Prince of Prussia regiment, he related to me an incident that had happened in the morning.

“It touched me, my friend, more than I could tell you. An officer of this regiment, named Berg,

was sitting on the ground in front of his platoon, with his hand resting on his thigh. This poor young man, fatigued with the doings of yesterday, of the night, and with the heat of the morning, which was very great, was resting a moment in this way, when a cannon-ball smashed his hand and his thigh. They went to his aid, but he would not allow a dressing to be applied, believing that, as the cannonade was still going on, the battle was not yet finished.

“ ‘No dressing,’ he said, ‘I am going to die, and I die content if the King wins the battle and can destroy this nation of incendiaries.’

“ ‘He has won it.’

“ ‘I die content, then,’<sup>1</sup> and he swooned away.”

The eyes of the King were wet with tears while he told me the touching story of this incident which honours both the officer and the regiment.

“As you have no tent, I have told Wobersnow to receive you in his. You may pass in it a better night than last.”

I thanked him exceedingly for this kindness of which I was in great need. I profited very little by it, however, as, when I entered the tent towards midnight, everybody was on the alert. Two hours afterwards, the enemy, who had remained in his

<sup>1</sup> This M. de Berg was carried to Frankfort, where he died four days after the battle, still repeating to the surgeon-major of the regiment, Köhler, the words he had used when he received his wound. He added: ‘Seven villages, the town of Küstrin burnt!—Are these men? My King is conqueror, I die.’

position under arms during the whole of the day before, began on this day towards two o'clock in the morning to defile by the right in the direction of Wilkersdorf and Cammin; he was followed by a frightful cannonade. At daybreak, the King pursued him with all his army as far as the other side of Tamsel; but as General Fermor had already occupied the heights of Cammin, and had furnished them with all his artillery, His Majesty could do absolutely nothing. He set up his headquarters at Tamsel.

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During the five days that we remained at Tamsel, I was called every evening at five o'clock. This pleasant estate, which belonged to an illustrious and respectable family of the country,<sup>1</sup> had cruelly suffered from the passage and occupation of the enemy. They had plundered, violated and massacred the peasants, male and female. I saw in front of the house the body of a poor unfortunate woman whom the Cossacks had violated, stripped and pierced in several places with their pikes. While I was with the King on the first day, he went over all the rooms of the mansion with me.

27th, 28th,  
29th, 30th,  
31st, at  
Tamsel.

“You see, my dear sir, in what a state this riff-raff has left the furniture of the worthy Wreeches, how they have broken the furniture and everything which they could not carry off. What these barbarians have done here, they have done to most of the peasants. Did you see that dead

<sup>1</sup> The family of Wreech.



woman in front of the garden? Does not all this raise your hair on your head? Is this war? Should not princes who use such troops blush with shame? They are guilty and responsible before God for all the horrors which their troops commit."

After having gone over the rooms of the house, he stayed a moment in the garden, which I thought was rather in the Dutch taste. As we went out, a peasant woman, fairly well dressed and beginning to be elderly, threw herself at the King's feet.

"Rise, my good woman, what is it you want?"

'Sire, I have come to entreat Your Majesty to give my son who is about to be married a small place which will earn him his bread. If Your Majesty grants me this favour, God who is in heaven will bless you.'

"My poor, good woman," said the King to her, "I have need of the blessing of heaven, but how can I give you a place when I am not sure of keeping my own?"

The peasant woman began to cry.

"Why do you cry?" said the King, who thought perhaps that her tears were flowing on account of what he had just said about his place, and without waiting for her reply, he dismissed her, saying: "Tell your son valiantly to beget children on his wife, and to come to Potsdam when peace is made."

His Majesty translated for me this conversation, which I had not been able to understand.

"You will agree, my dear sir, that it is ludicrous



to come and ask me for anything in a time like this.”

‘But, Sire, this poor woman does not know your present position. She counted on your kindness, and imagined that a King can always give proof of it in all times and in all places.’

“Oh, the deuce, my dear sir, it cannot be done. To return to the barbarians. According to the report made by General Bredow, whom I sent to the battlefield with two regiments of cavalry to bury the dead and carry off the wounded and the cannon we have taken, I can tell you now with precision that the enemy lost considerably and to an extent which I had not imagined. In addition to these losses”—which he did not fix, however, I do not know whether by forgetfulness—“we took 3000 prisoners, six generals, 84 officers; we captured 101 pieces of cannon, a pair of kettle-drums, 27 flags, a large part of their baggage and of their military chest. We lost in dead,<sup>1</sup> wounded and missing about 5000 men, and a few pieces of cannon which the enemy captured when my jackanapes of the left wing fled before the Russian cavalry. This cavalry, by the bye, is not worth much; it would never stand before mine. The infantry is a great deal better; it can defend itself. Well led, something might be done with it. The Russian generals are as Marshal Keith described them

<sup>1</sup> General Zieten was of the number of the first [this, of course, is wrong; General Zieten lived for long afterwards], Generals Forcade, Kahlden, Froideville in the number of the second. The two latter generals died of their wounds.

to me, bad generals: very good infantry for holding firm, still novices at manœuvring; they do not know how to move; but they held firm, and my rogues of the left wing abandoned me. I am ashamed of it; I would not have thought the thing possible."

This language of the King made me suspect that in this shame entered a little self-esteem that had miscalculated, or had not listened to the advice which had been given him. I will explain. When the King left Silesia to meet the Russians, he asked Marshal Keith what the Russian troops were like.

'Sire, they are brave troops who defend themselves well, but who are badly led.'

"Good, good," said the King to him, "you will learn that I attacked these rogues, and that at the first attack I put them to flight."

'Sire, these rogues do not fly so easily, and I believe it my duty to tell Your Majesty this with that truth and regard which I owe you.'

"Well, you will see that these are not the same Russians as those you knew."

After such language, he could do nothing but attack and put to flight without more ado. Yet, after the attack and the flight to which they had indeed at first been put, they held firm until eight o'clock in the evening, and it was, I think, this stubbornness in holding their ground and in defending themselves which entered a little into the shame he spoke of. How, in fact, after the experience he had had, could he maintain to

Marshal Keith that these rogues were men who could be put to flight immediately, or how could Marshal Keith concede that he had not judged so well as the King?

This reflection which I have just made is perhaps venturesome; what would make it seem probable to me was the silence which the King kept towards the Marshal on the battle and on all that might bear any relation to the Russians—a silence which struck Marshal Keith with astonishment, as he told me himself when we rejoined the army of the Margrave Charles. He did not deny that the King had reasons to justify him a little in the idea which he had formed; for, as a fact, the Russians had at first fallen back before the attack of our advance-guard, and if the bridges had not been burnt, the battle would have been quickly decided; that is, according to what His Majesty said.

Every day, in the morning and the afternoon, the King read his beloved Lucretius, which was, as he used to say, his breviary when he was down-hearted; but, contrary to his habit, he said nothing to me during the first four days of what he was reading. Finally, on the last day:

“You see me,” he said, “with my Lucretius, and that will prove to you that I am cast down. To lead the life of a wandering knight, to roam the country and the high roads, finding new enemies continually to combat, to be able to bring nothing to perfection on account of their multitude, all this, my friend, is scarcely very diverting. It is



not these Russians, who are still within my reach, who worry me. I shall find means to drive them away from here ; but it is other enemies of whom I must seek to rid myself. I must lose no time in going to meet them and prevent them from taking advantage of my absence by attempting something, as I believe they have a great desire to do. It is to distract myself a little from my gloomy ideas that I am reading my friend Lucretius, and, like him, I say : ‘ Powerful Venus, you who hold in your arms the cruel god of war, who, in love with your charms, rests on your breast his dreadful head, deign to move him, so that the horrors of war may at last give place to the pleasant ways of peace, so that the Prussian people may breathe after so many calamities, and their wandering knight may quietly return to his Potsdam, where he may enjoy in the arms of philosophy a repose of which he has been deprived for so long, where he may see his dear companion in misfortune cultivate the muses and a loving wife, to enjoy with her all the bliss of which poor mortals are capable.’ Such is my new form of prayer. You know the two which I say often enough ; they are not so eloquent as this. And now say, my dear sir, that I am not devout, that I do not pray, and that I run a great risk of being one day broiled ever so little.”

‘ Although your prayers, Sire, repeated often enough, do not make me believe in any great fervour of devotion, I do not think that you need



fear broiling, if you can manage to say seriously :  
 “O God, have pity on my soul, if I have one.”—  
 Your Majesty says this sometimes, but with only  
 faint sincerity.’

He laughed a good deal :

“My friend, my friend, as I despair of converting  
 you, do not hope to make me change my opinions.  
 My principles, which I have reflected much upon,  
 are unshakable. Do you not think that they are  
 so ? ”

I did not wish to reply ; but I was pressed so  
 much that I had to speak. Not wishing to  
 enter into particular reasons for what I had  
 just advanced, I contented myself with saying  
 to him :

‘It appears to me that, if Your Majesty were  
 thoroughly sure of your opinions and principles,  
 you would not speak about them so often.’

This reply, which might have led far, to my  
 great surprise ended the conversation. The King  
 changed the subject on the instant.

“Do you know, my dear sir, that within ten  
 months I have after all beaten the French, the  
 Austrians and the Russians. I do not think that  
 my dispositions in this battle can be criticised ;  
 I assure you, I did all that was humanly possible.  
 If my cowards of the left wing had only held firm, I  
 should have repeated the story of Leuthen. I have  
 sent Zieten’s hussars to Lower Lusatia, and have  
 sent after them Prince Francis of Brunswick, who  
 commands some infantry. To-morrow morning, we

might very well strike our camp here, and take leave of those whom I have not been able to destroy after the manner of the Interdict. Good evening. Remember my Lucretian prayer. Until to-morrow.”

END OF VOL. I.



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